

PRICELESS

THE U.S. AMBASSADORS FUND FOR CULTURAL PRESERVATION

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS

CONTENTS

| | |
|----------|---|
| FOREWORD | 5 |
|----------|---|

Bonnie Burnham, President
World Monuments Fund

| | |
|--------------|---|
| INTRODUCTION | 7 |
|--------------|---|



| | |
|---------------|----------|
| AFRICA | 8 |
|---------------|----------|

| | |
|---|----|
| Kenya: Rock Art Connects Past and Present | 10 |
|---|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Nigeria: Gate of Swords Regains Grandeur | 14 |
|--|----|

| | |
|---|----|
| Tanzania: Preserving Medieval Port Cities | 16 |
|---|----|



| | |
|------------------|-----------|
| EAST ASIA | 22 |
|------------------|-----------|

| | |
|---|----|
| China: Saving Intangible Qiang Heritage | 24 |
|---|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Laos: Exploring Splendor and Sacrifice of Taoism | 28 |
|--|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Mongolia: Safeguarding a Buddhist Treasure | 32 |
|--|----|



| | |
|---------------------------|-----------|
| EURASIA AND EUROPE | 36 |
|---------------------------|-----------|

| | |
|---|----|
| Macedonia: Restoring Byzantine Masterpieces | 38 |
|---|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Turkey: Preserving the Legacy of a Lost City | 42 |
|--|----|

| | |
|---------------------------------------|----|
| Ukraine: New Life for a Literary Home | 46 |
|---------------------------------------|----|



| | |
|--------------------|-----------|
| MIDDLE EAST | 50 |
|--------------------|-----------|

| | |
|------------------------------|----|
| Iraq: Ancient Babylon Reborn | 52 |
|------------------------------|----|

| | |
|---|----|
| Jordan: Temple of the Winged Lions Takes Flight | 56 |
|---|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Lebanon: Rediscovering a Byzantine Jewel | 62 |
|--|----|



| | |
|-------------------------------|-----------|
| SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA | 66 |
|-------------------------------|-----------|

| | |
|-------------------------------------|----|
| Afghanistan: Hope for Herat Citadel | 68 |
|-------------------------------------|----|

| | |
|------------------------------------|----|
| Nepal: Reviving Patan Royal Palace | 72 |
|------------------------------------|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Turkmenistan: Securing Sacred Silk Road Site | 76 |
|--|----|



| | |
|---------------------|-----------|
| THE AMERICAS | 80 |
|---------------------|-----------|

| | |
|--|----|
| Bolivia: Communities Unite to Preserve Chapels | 82 |
|--|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Mexico: Aqueduct Spans Cultures, Generations | 88 |
|--|----|

| | |
|--|----|
| Peru: Cradle of Civilization in the Americas | 92 |
|--|----|

“Architecture is *a conversation* . . .



Villa Rotonda

. . . between generations *carried across time.*”

– Vincent Scully, architectural historian

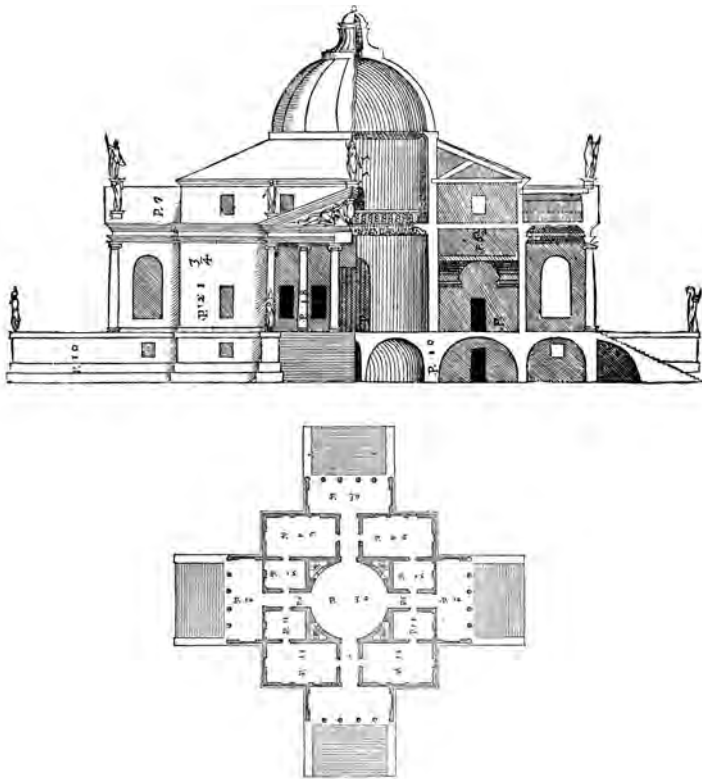
FOREWORD

Learning about architecture and how it frames our experiences has been one of the passions of my life. The flame ignited for me in a humanities class in my final year of secondary school when an image of the Villa Rotunda in northern Italy by the Renaissance architect Andrea Palladio flashed on the screen. Although students around the world today may have access to images of magnificent places through the Internet, I had never seen such an extraordinary creation. I grew up in a traditional, rural community in the American South in the post–World War II era. But in all the years of my growing up, no one had tried to explain what all the Colonial-pillared buildings surrounding me were meant to communicate, or why the severe gray stone Gothic revival church that I attended every Sunday was built as it was.

Discovering the Villa Rotunda was the beginning of a journey for me that would span generations, time and the world. I had to see this place! And when I finally did, just a few years later, it was no disappointment. It seemed miraculous that this building had survived the centuries, and over its long life had inspired so many others—both modest and grand. I felt proud to be part of this legacy. I also realized that each of us is shaped by the experience of the world around us. The places and traditions that we grew up with are as much a part of our identity as our DNA.

Today, our cultural heritage is in a time of crisis. Many of the iconic places and powerful traditions that have shaped our civilization are under siege. We live in a world of tumultuous change, and we face a host of problems that threaten life as we have lived it. Exploding population growth, rapid urbanization, climate change and changing cultural values—punctuated by devastating natural and man-made catastrophes—are transforming our world.

In addition, the vocabulary of the built world has changed. New concepts of scale, new building materials and technologies, and novel styles of expression are defining a future that has little to do with



Andrea Palladio's plan of Villa Rotunda.

past precedents. Everything about the way people interact within the communities that are being created today is different. Virtually everyone's cultural experience is now part of the global culture of the digital age. While it is a transformational moment of great creativity, it is also a challenging time for tradition.

In response to this dramatic challenge, we need to be vigilant to defend the places, objects and traditions from which our individual and collective sense of identity derives. We cannot build a peaceful and prosperous world without evidence of the history upon which human civilization is founded.

Unfortunately, scant resources are available for the daunting task of caring for cultural heritage and providing a means for its future productive use. Compared to the social and human needs created by our rapidly transforming society, especially in countries intent on emerging into the global economy, the preservation of cultural heritage is a low priority. Local communities, especially in the developing world, cannot marshal the resources they need to preserve the places, objects and traditions that mean the most to them. Faced with the pressures of development and the inevitability of neglect, these treasures are crumbling and disappearing.

Addressing this issue, the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) is a beacon of hope. Established little more than a decade ago, it has made a real difference by bolstering the preservation of places, museum collections and traditions that were at the brink of total loss. AFCP focuses specifically on preserving heritage resources in countries that are facing development challenges, where there are few other resources available for such work.

Projects supported by AFCP are developed through a dialogue between U.S. embassies and heritage advocates on the ground. At this local level, extraordinary people and active grass-roots organizations are working with communities to identify at-risk landmarks, collections and traditions. AFCP helps them to connect with experts who can help find solutions to their problems and with organizations that can boost awareness and raise these local efforts onto the world stage.

AFCP program participants share a common purpose: to demonstrate that cultural heritage is an important social and economic building block of society, and that the solutions developed for the sites and resources that are the focus of AFCP grants can be sustained through active community engagement long after the funds have been expended.

The projects profiled in this volume are inspiring. At Ani in eastern Turkey and through the program to promote awareness of the Qiang people in China, AFCP grants are building cultural understanding between neighboring peoples about the diversity of traditions and treasures that they have inherited. At Babylon and in Herat, efforts have been mobilized to preserve ancient places of legendary

significance that have been impacted by recent conflict. At Caral in Peru and at the White Dacha in Ukraine, support from AFCP is helping to interpret, present and preserve places and objects of tremendous historical significance that can become tourism generators. At Kilwa in Tanzania, the reconstruction of an ancient cistern will bring back the precious resource of clean water to a community that desperately needs it.

Virtually every project supported through AFCP has an element of community training and local capacity building. Through this direct engagement, people recover their pride of association with places that have gained worldwide recognition through AFCP. The spotlight of international recognition restores confidence in efforts that had previously lost hope, and helps ensure the community's long-term stewardship.

Equally important is AFCP's emphasis on preserving intangible aspects of culture—language, music and oral history—that are vanishing as people abandon the practices and places where they once flourished. Recording these ephemeral traditions may be our only way of remembering that they ever existed.

Like the miracle of the Villa Rotunda's survival and influence that draws together so much historical evolution within one extant monument, the miracle of the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation lies in helping so many rare and meaningful places, objects and traditions to survive. By doing so, AFCP speaks not only to the future, but also to the present, helping people to transcend national borders and connect. It demonstrates our commitment as Americans to taking part in the global community. The projects judiciously selected for AFCP support help us all—locally and globally—to join a conversation about just how important these places, objects and traditions are and will continue to be.



Bonnie Burnham, President
World Monuments Fund
New York, New York

“Cultural preservation offers an opportunity to show a different American face to other countries, one that is non-commercial, non-political, and non-military. By taking a leading role in efforts to preserve cultural heritage, we show our respect for other cultures by protecting their traditions.”

– 106th Congress (Public Law 106–553)

INTRODUCTION

With the creation of the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) in 2001, the United States pledged its support for the preservation of cultural heritage in developing countries and demonstrated U.S. respect for other cultures. Since then, AFCP has supported projects to preserve cultural heritage in more than 125 countries around the world.

AFCP supports the preservation of both tangible and intangible cultural heritage through projects of varying scale and complexity. AFCP-supported activities range from documentation of traditions to physical treatment and technical training in the preservation and protection of sites and collections. The program is global in scale and supports the preservation of cultural heritage in Africa, Asia, Europe and the Americas. Yet AFCP is also inherently local in that U.S. embassy staff work directly with public institutions, nongovernmental organizations and local communities to carry out AFCP-supported projects.

The 18 cultural preservation projects featured in this book are only a fraction of the 800 projects that have received AFCP support since 2001. Each profile offers insight into the range of AFCP-funded activities and provides compelling examples of the program’s success.

Cultural heritage serves as an enduring reminder of the historical experiences and achievements of humanity. By supporting cultural preservation, AFCP helps extend the value of cultural heritage as a vital and defining element of communities and nations, and helps ensure that it will be enjoyed and shared for generations to come.



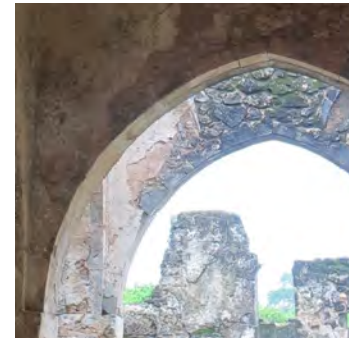
AFRICA



KENYA



NIGERIA

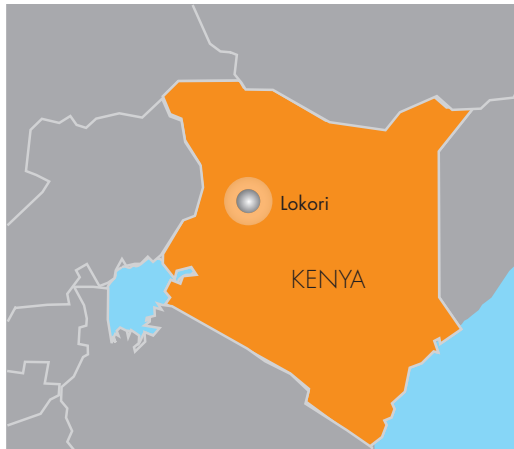


TANZANIA

KENYA



ROCK ART CONNECTS PAST AND PRESENT



Just outside the remote town of Lokori in Kenya's Kerio Valley, an ancient burial site called Namoratung'a contains some of the world's oldest art. Hundreds of etched stone grave markers dating back more than 2,300 years can be found throughout the site. Engraved with designs similar to those still used by neighboring Pokot, Samburu and Turkana communities to brand livestock, the ancient grave markers are among the most rich and diverse rock-art sites in the world.

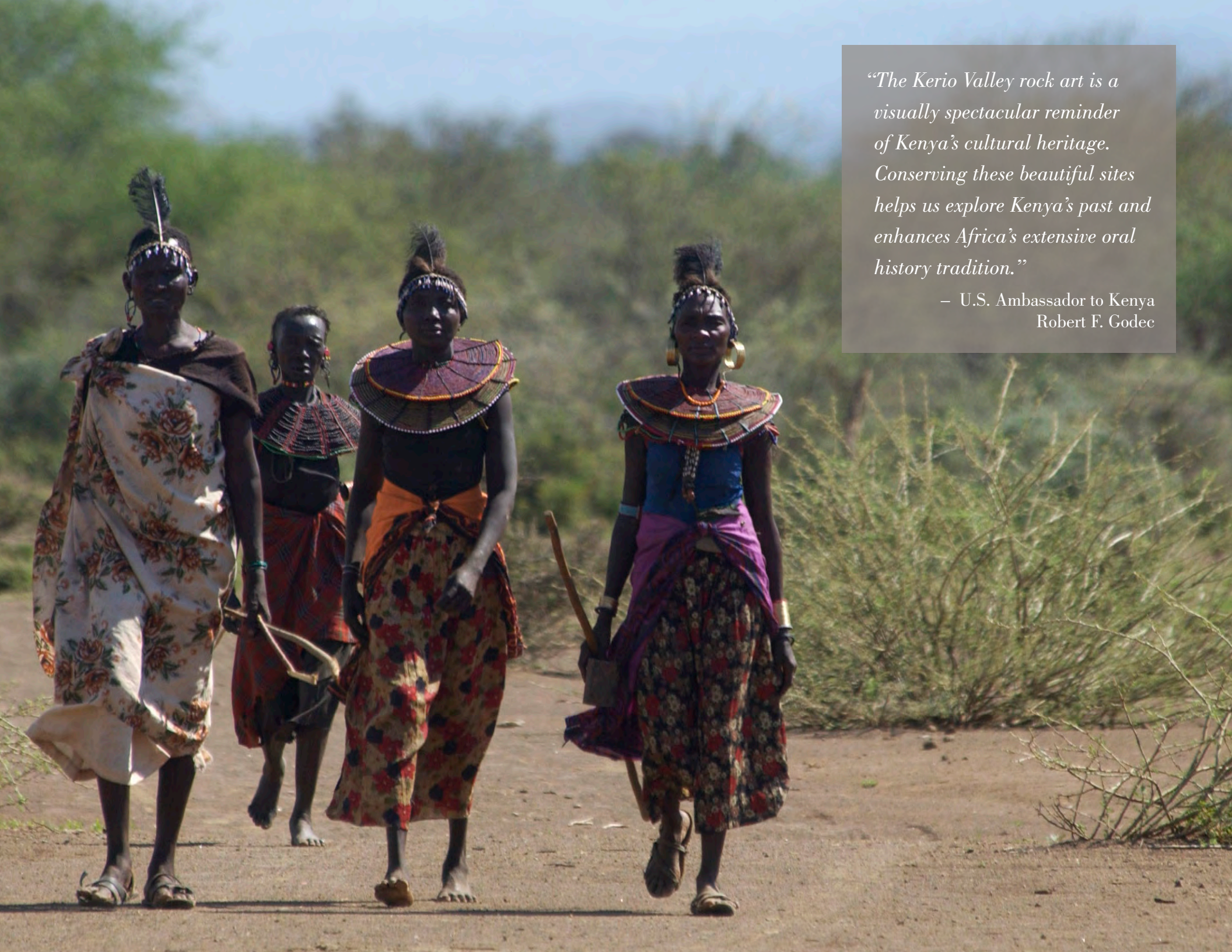
African rock art is one of the world's oldest surviving art forms. As former United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan stated, African rock art is "one of the oldest and most extensive records on Earth of human thought," adding that it represents "the very emergence of the human imagination." In fact, by the time humans began to use written language, African rock art had been in existence for thousands of years. Beyond its artistic merit, rock art is an invaluable anthropological resource that offers a rare glimpse into the minds of our most ancient ancestors.

Although ancient rock art is now protected by law in most countries, these unique, fragile and irreplaceable works are too often threatened by theft, vandalism and thoughtless handling. In Lokori, local residents were unaware of the art's significance or vulnerability until recently.

In 2009, the U.S. Embassy in Nairobi granted \$53,200 through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to the Trust for African Rock Art (TARA) to raise awareness of the art's value and help restore and protect the site for future generations. Since August 2009, TARA has been implementing a community rock-art conservation project in Lokori not only to ensure long-term conservation of the Namoratung'a site, but also to promote responsible tourism to the area through local infrastructure development and engagement with the community.



Opposite: A young man rests at Namoratung'a, an ancient burial site, amid rock art with etched stone markings dating back more than 2,300 years. Left: People from the local community visit Namoratung'a.



“The Kerio Valley rock art is a visually spectacular reminder of Kenya’s cultural heritage. Conserving these beautiful sites helps us explore Kenya’s past and enhances Africa’s extensive oral history tradition.”

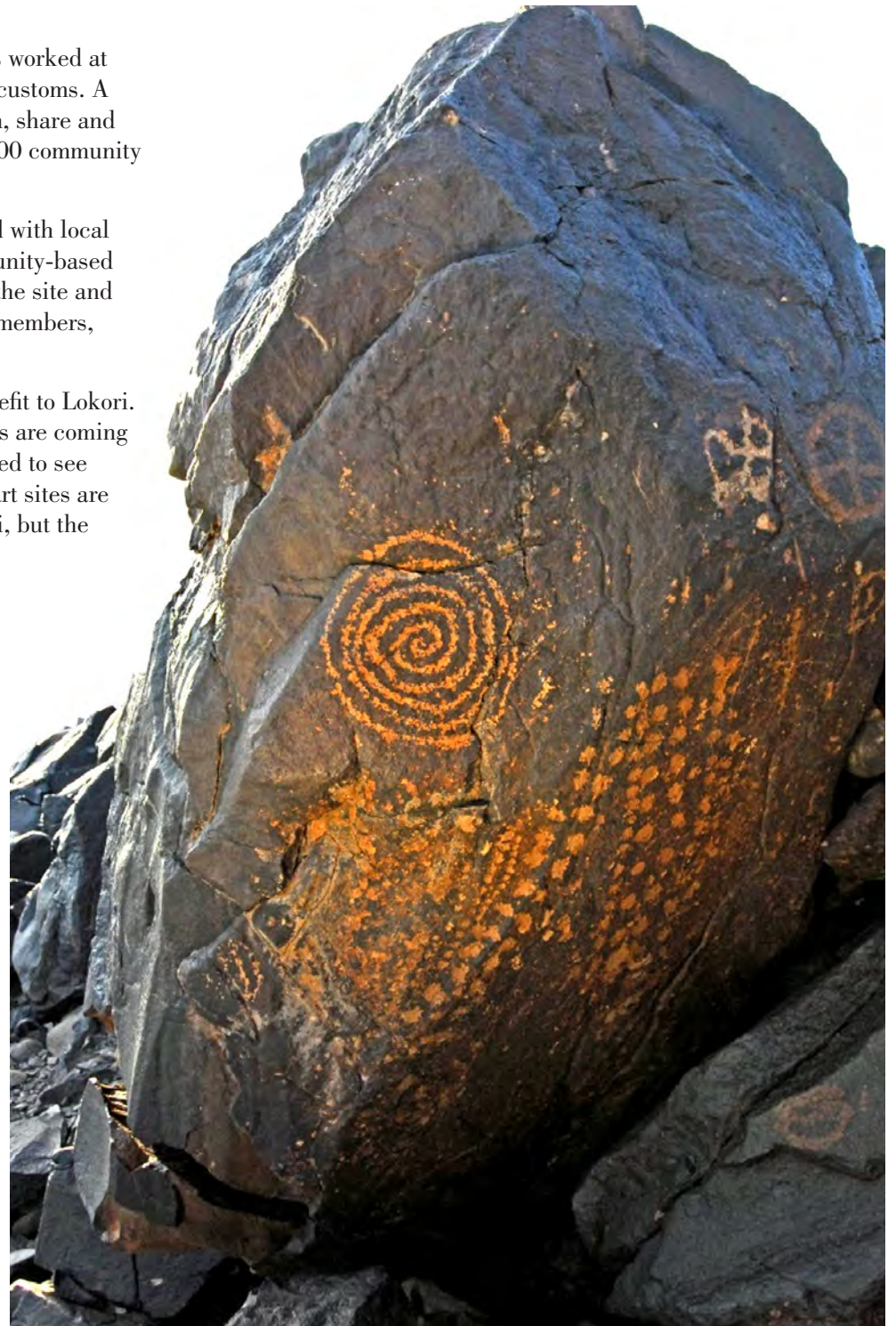
– U.S. Ambassador to Kenya
Robert F. Godec

In collaboration with National Museums of Kenya scientists, project coordinators worked at the Namoratung'a site to establish links between the art and contemporary local customs. A workshop and exhibition were created to encourage community members to learn, share and compare notes about their heritage. Since the project was launched, more than 100 community leaders and youth have received training through workshops and seminars.

In addition to surveying and documenting the rock-art engravings, TARA worked with local stakeholders to develop a management plan for the site and equipped two community-based organizations with basic camping facilities so that locals can cook for visitors to the site and offer basic services. These activities are generating income for local community members, helping to alleviate poverty and raising living standards.

Local people now recognize that the rock-art site is a resource that can be of benefit to Lokori. As one participant said, "Because of these rocks, new things have come up—cars are coming here, something that never used to happen. People are visiting here; we never used to see them. Schools have been opened because of the Namoratung'a site. So the rock-art sites are very important." TARA hopes the project will benefit not only residents of Lokori, but the whole of Kenya.

Opposite: Pokot women walk to a tribal meeting. The ancient rock-art designs at Namoratung'a are similar to designs used by the Pokot to brand livestock. Below: Project coordinators and local community members collaborated on a plan to promote responsible tourism to the site. Right: Namoratung'a rock art.



NIGERIA



GATE OF SWORDS REGAINS GRANDEUR

Imposing, earthen walls and more than 15 gates enclose the ancient city of Kano in northern Nigeria. Measuring more than 23 kilometers in circumference, the Kano city walls and gates were constructed during the reign of Sakri Gijimasu (1095–1134 C.E.) to protect Kano’s growing population. Though the majority of Kano’s residents are Hausa-speaking, the city is also known as *Tumbin Giwa*, meaning “melting pot” in Hausa, due to the diversity of people who have passed through its gates over the centuries.

Kano’s oldest and grandest gate, Kofar Kansakali, is believed to have been built in the 12th century. Meaning “swords” in Hausa, Kansakali is the gate where traditional warriors took up their weapons before departing for battle. Resting at the gateway to Sokoto, the seat of the caliphate, Kofar Kansakali is a significant landmark that has played a critical role in Kano’s history, culture and economy.

Nigeria has submitted Kano’s ancient city walls and gates for nomination as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Unfortunately, many centuries of natural and human intervention have severely damaged the structures. Kofar Kansakali has been particularly degraded. By the 1980s, the gate had mostly disintegrated. Only the adjoining walls remained, which account for less than a quarter of the gate’s original dimensions.

In August 2010, the U.S. Diplomatic Mission in Abuja granted \$10,000 to Nigeria’s National Commission for Museums and Monuments through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to restore Kofar Kansakali to its original grandeur.

Left: The restored Kofar Kansakali, the oldest gate in Kano, is believed to have been built in the 12th century. Opposite: Kofar Kansakali was constructed during the reign of Sakri Gijimasu (1095–1134 C.E.) to protect Kano’s growing population. Inset: The original walls enclosing Kano were as wide as 30 meters at the base.

The project was executed by local builders from within the traditional emirate system. A crew of artisans, masons and laborers headed by *Sarkin Gini* (Chief Builder) Alh Gwadabe restored Kansakali gate using traditional building materials based on oral and written descriptions of the gate's original appearance.

The project, completed in July 2011, has generated a great deal of interest, enthusiasm and energy in the local community. It restored the integrity of much of the northwestern portion of the ancient city walls, and ensured that future generations will be able to enjoy the authentic tradition of Kofar Kansakali for years to come.

Peter Claussen, former public affairs officer at the U.S. Mission in Abuja, and Alhaji Abubakar Sadiq Mohammed, Nigerian minister of culture, tourism and national orientation, accompanied His Royal Highness the Emir of Kano Alhaji Ado Bayero in laying the first stone.

"The United States hopes that our modest gift to Kano's past can help us, together, to choose to build its future," Claussen said.

"The reconstruction of the Kofar Kansakali—the westward-facing and oldest gate of the ancient city of Kano—has saved an important piece of Kano's 1,000-year-old heritage. Kano is famous for its mud-brick city wall with grand gates. And just as the United States is known for its melting pot of cultures, Kano is famous as Tumbin Giwa, Hausa for "melting pot," because of the many different people who entered its gates, receiving a warm welcome over the centuries, to buy and sell, build and settle. The United States is proud to have been part of this restoration project."

— Former U.S. Ambassador to Nigeria
Terence P. McCulley



©STEVE KEMPER



TANZANIA

PRESERVING MEDIEVAL PORT CITIES



Two small islands off the coast of Tanzania shelter some of the most important cultural treasures in East Africa. The two former island cities, Kilwa Kisiwani and Songo Mnara, feature architectural ruins that date back more than 800 years and collectively constitute the Kilwa Kisiwani World Heritage site. The remains of these two great medieval East African port cities provide an unparalleled glimpse into the world of a sophisticated mercantile culture whose people and cultural traditions unfortunately long since have disappeared. Remains of opulent palaces, mosques, houses and other structures found on the islands provide evidence of a cosmopolitan trading center built on a grand scale with great skill, ingenuity and artistry.

Kilwa's rise to power began in the 10th century, when the city was established as a medieval sultanate by Ali ibn al-Hassan Shirazi, a prince whose father ruled Shiraz, Persia. Ali ibn al-Hassan set sail out of the fortified capital city of Hormuz within the Gulf and made his way to the East African coast, where he is said to have purchased the island of Kilwa from the local Bantu inhabitants. It was ruled by the Shirazi dynasty until 1277. During this period, the city's advantageous location made it a magnet for international trade, and the Great Mosque was built. The first gold coins struck south of Ethiopia are said to have been minted in Kilwa to support the city's global commerce.

Stone houses and mosques were built throughout Kilwa in the early decades of the 1400s, and by 1500, a visiting Portuguese explorer reported seeing houses of Islamic Middle Eastern design made of coral stone, including the ruler's luxurious, 100-room palace.



Opposite: A goat climbs the wall of a centuries-old building on Kilwa Kisiwani. Left: Coast of Kilwa Kisiwani as seen from the pier.



The Yemeni Arab family of Abu al-Mawahib, known as the Mahdali dynasty, replaced the Shirazis around 1300 and ruled until 1505, when it was overthrown by a Portuguese invasion. Throughout the medieval period, intermarriages among Persian, Arab and Bantu residents gave the island city of Kilwa and its satellite city, Songo Mnara, a worldly flavor and contributed to the region's rich artistic and architectural traditions. Contemporary Swahili culture is thought to have been strongly influenced by the Kilwa civilization.

Both islands flourished from the 14th century through the 16th century, when some of the grandest architecture in the region was constructed. Some of the houses on Songo Mnara are among the best-preserved and most archaeologically intact domestic buildings in East Africa. The palace known as Husuni Kubwa (or "large house"), built from 1320 to 1333, is the earliest and by far the largest and most sophisticated surviving major building south of Somalia.

The islands' archaeological sites are crucial to understanding Swahili culture, the Islamization of East Africa and medieval and modern commerce in the region. Unfortunately, the sites are threatened by harsh climatic conditions. High humidity, torrential seasonal rains and strong winds high in salinity pose significant threats to the sites' integrity. Also threatening is the possibility of uncontrolled future development around the sites. For these reasons, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) placed the Kilwa Kisiwani World Heritage site on its List of World Heritage in Danger in 2004.

To help reverse the process, the U.S. Embassy in Dar es Salaam awarded \$700,000 to World Monuments Fund through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation. The grant supports a project to protect the site's most vulnerable structures through urgent conservation work, improved sea defenses and other emergency stabilization measures. The funds are also being used to establish a sustainable management plan for the site and better living conditions for island residents through reconstruction of an ancient cistern that will provide clean water.

By helping Tanzanians to balance the competing demands of tourism, economic development, social change and heritage preservation, the conservation project seeks to ensure the survival of Tanzania's remarkable monuments for future generations of visitors, scholars and historians.

Left: Aspects of contemporary Swahili culture may be traced to Kilwa civilization (11th to 16th centuries). Opposite: Gereza Fort on Kilwa Kisiwani.





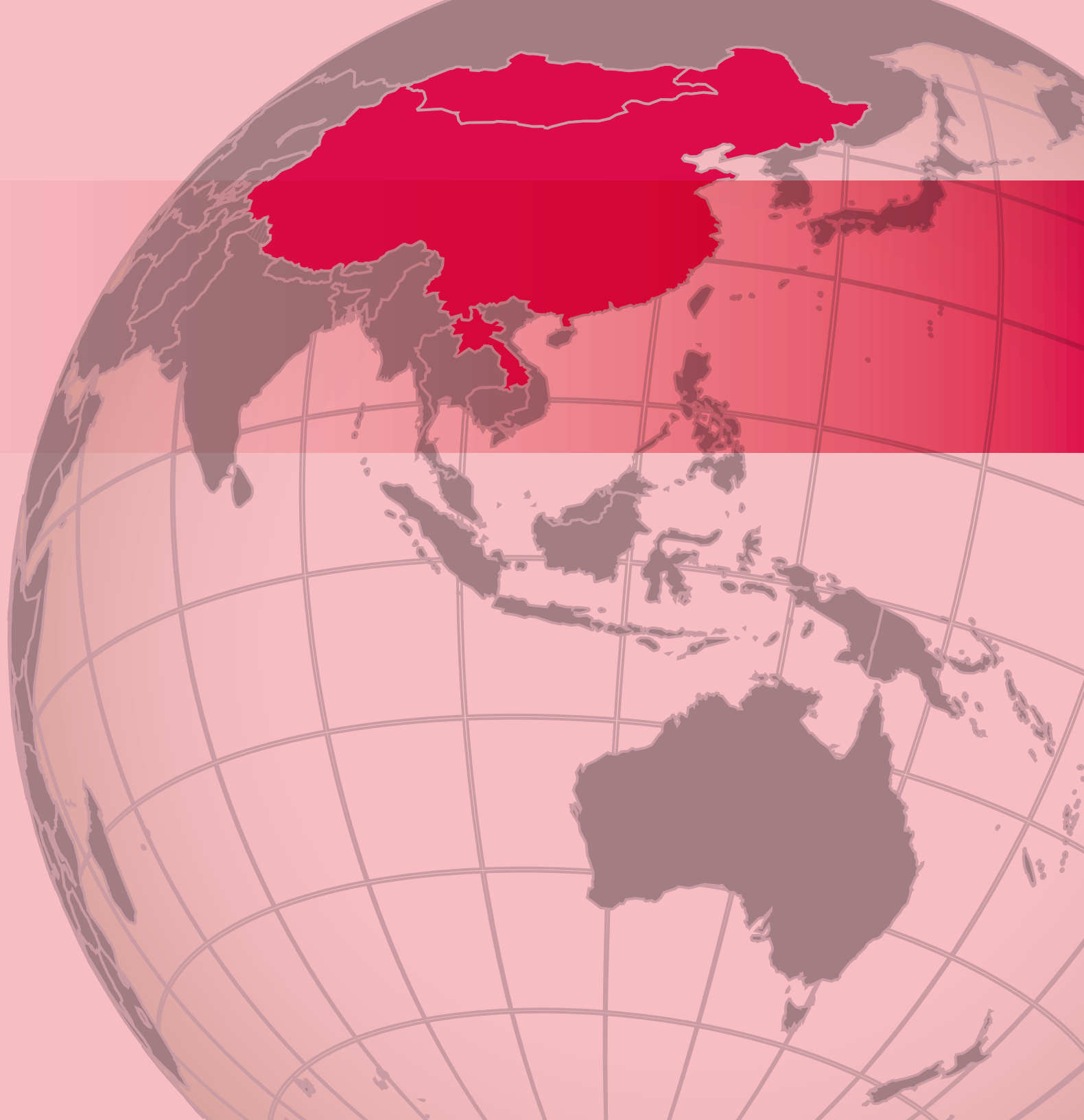
Top left: Remaining wall of the Great Mosque on Kilwa Kisiwani. Top right: Ruins of the Husuni Kubwa, or "large house," on Kilwa Kisiwani. Bottom left: Niches in Makutani Palace on Kilwa Kisiwani. Opposite, from left: Gereza Fort on Kilwa Kisiwani; Graceful archway in the Great Mosque on Kilwa Kisiwani.



“Some of the greatest world treasures are found right here in Tanzania, and while the world claims their global value, they remain uniquely Tanzanian. By working to preserve these historic structures and creating a framework for balanced development, we can ensure the survival of Tanzania’s most precious ancient monuments.”

– U.S. Ambassador to Tanzania
Alfonso E. Lenhardt





EAST ASIA



CHINA



LAOS



MONGOLIA



CHINA

SAVING INTANGIBLE QIANG HERITAGE



The Qiang people, known in China as “people of the clouds,” are one of China’s oldest ethnic minorities, first appearing in written records during the Shang dynasty (circa 17th to 11th centuries B.C.E.). The Qiang, who were known as great warriors, worshipped many gods, including gods of heaven, sun, fire, mountains, rivers and trees. An essential element of Qiang culture is recitation of passages and performance of rituals and practices led by a *shibi*, or shaman.

Already a fragile minority culture, the Qiang were devastated by the 2008 Sichuan earthquake in which more than 30,000 Qiang—10 percent of the Qiang population—perished. Today, one-third of the remaining Qiang live in cities and no longer speak their native language. The remaining two-thirds live in village communities whose traditions are threatened by the encroachments of a rapidly modernizing China. Many younger Qiang are abandoning their native villages and traditional way of life.

A’er, a small mountain village of 500 Qiang whose strong identification with their heritage makes the village instrumental in preserving Qiang culture, was also touched by tragedy. The local temple and *stupa* (a monumental pile of earth marking a sacred spot) that are central to village ceremonies were partially destroyed by the 2008 Sichuan earthquake. Local residents were determined to restore these structures to their former condition, but they lacked the necessary funds to purchase tools and other building materials.

To aid the Qiang of A’er in this endeavor, the U.S. Embassy in Beijing donated \$32,300 to the Beijing Cultural Heritage Protection Center (CHP) through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2009 to help village residents restore the *stupa* and temple and preserve their cultural traditions.



Opposite: A thousand-year-old stone Qiang tower in A’er. Left: Embroidery on a Qiang dress.



In addition to the restoration of the village *stupa* and temple, the project helped the Qiang people document their intangible heritage through audio recordings, film and text, as well as through a culture and language preservation program. The project was unique in that it sought to sustain living cultural traditions in forms that could be transmitted to future generations, rather than to simply exhibit Qiang artifacts in a museum.

Because the Qiang lack a written language, the project used a combination of media to preserve passages and customs that have been passed down through oral tradition. A book on Qiang culture translated village traditions through drawings and faithful translations into Mandarin Chinese. Those customs that could not be accurately translated were captured through a set of audio recordings. Finally, a traveling photo exhibition and documentary served to convey Qiang culture through visual representations.

The project team also produced a training manual recording the methods and management of its preservation process, so that other groups undertaking similar projects might benefit from the team's experiences. Now that Qiang traditions have been documented in print, audio and film, they can be taught to younger generations of Qiang living far from their mountainous homeland and shared more broadly with other Chinese citizens.

According to CHP, the project has inspired the A'er Qiang community to continue to preserve and raise awareness of its culture. The A'er Qiang have since established the A'er Villagers' Qiang Cultural Heritage Protection Association, whose recent accomplishments include the restoration of a thousand-year-old stone Qiang tower, as well as the organization of a conference that gathered minorities from universities, media outlets and organizations around the country to discuss the development of ethnic minorities' cultural rights and civil society empowerment in China.

The project was the first step in motivating the A'er villagers into action, and they have already made plans to work with various organizations to continue to preserve Qiang culture. The villagers hope their example of preserving their culture will in time play a larger role in the preservation of worldwide cultural diversity.



Top: A Qiang couple models traditional dress in A'er, a small mountain village home to some 500 Qiang. Bottom: Earthquake-damaged *stupa*. Opposite, from left: A'er villagers celebrate in front of the restored *stupa*; Qiang house in A'er.



“China’s Qiang ethnic minority has an ancient, unique and fascinating culture revolving around rituals passed on orally by shibi, or cultural guardians. Restoring the A’er village stupa and temple, and helping villagers document their traditions, is an important step in revitalizing local culture and strengthening Qiang cultural pride.”

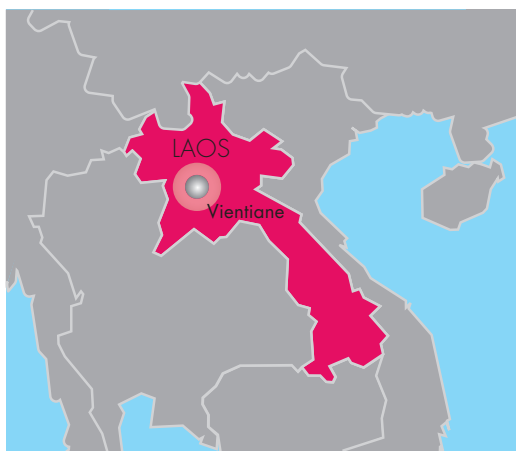
— U.S. Ambassador to China
Gary Locke





LAOS

EXPLORING SPLENDOR AND SACRIFICE OF TAOISM



Spread across the hills of five Asian countries—Laos, Burma, Thailand, Vietnam and China—the Yao are among Laos’ most important ethnic minorities. The Yao comprise two groups, the Iu Mien and Kim Di Mun peoples, who practice a form of Taoism that they brought with them to the hills of Laos during their migration from southwest China more than 100 years ago. Their Taoist traditions are a distinguishing feature in Laos, a country whose population is predominantly Buddhist.

The estimated number of Iu Mien and Kim Di Mun in Laos varies widely; estimates range from 14,500 to 23,000. The Kim Di Mun represent a significantly smaller portion of this number, with only 21 villages in three provinces.

While economic development is bringing great benefits to many parts of Laos, it is also changing traditional ways of life, including those of the Yao. The lifestyles of the Iu Mien and Kim Di Mun peoples have changed in the last decade due to resettlement initiatives, and new livelihoods have replaced their former agrarian occupations. In addition, the transition from upland to lowland residence has disrupted traditional belief systems and the rituals related to them. Traditional Iu Mien and Kim Di Mun ritual objects include hand-painted bamboo paper masks, richly embroidered priests’ robes, and ancient texts written in Chinese calligraphy. Taoist priests and shamans, or holy men, train for many years to conduct ceremonies for rites of passage and for paying tribute to ancestors.

Many Iu Mien and Kim Di Mun rituals, objects, and traditions are now threatened by social changes. The change in livelihoods has caused hardship for some families, forcing them to sell cultural artifacts, many of which then leave the country. With the loss of these objects comes



Opposite: Ceremony with four Yao Mien candidates for ordination. Left: The *Splendor and Sacrifice: Taoism of Northern Laos* exhibition at the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre in Luang Prabang, Laos.



the discontinuation of specific rituals and ceremonies that require their use, and the inability to pass on these objects and associated knowledge of their use to the next generation.

Further, the individuals versed in the indigenous cultural traditions are elderly, often in their 60s and older. When this generation passes away, experts fear that the information will be lost. Research and documentation of Iu Mien and Kim Di Mun traditions, especially rituals, are urgent.

Supported by a \$30,000 grant from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation through the U.S. Embassy in Vientiane, the Traditional Arts and Ethnology Centre (TAEC) in Laos launched a two-year project in 2008 to document a Kim Di Mun ordination ceremony for Taoist priests and a Iu Mien New Year's celebration. The project was led by TAEC's founding director, Tara Gujadhur.

As part of the project, anthropologist Jacques Lemoine consulted with Yao Taoist priests and elders. Documentation of Taoist traditions was produced through observation, interviews and photographs, which are archived at TAEC. The Kim Di Mun ordination ceremony and the Iu Mien New Year's celebration were recorded in high-definition digital video.

The project culminated in *Splendor and Sacrifice: Taoism of Northern Laos*, an exhibition at TAEC that explored Iu Mien and Kim Di Mun Taoist beliefs through the ceremonial costumes worn for various rites and the objects used in rituals. More than 200 people from local businesses, schools and the Iu Mien and Kim Di Mun communities attended the exhibition's official opening, which was covered by Lao Television and the *Vientiane Times* newspaper. Iu Mien women demonstrated embroidery techniques at the *Splendor and Sacrifice* opening, and appeared at TAEC's Handicraft Demonstration event several days later. Kim Di Mun men demonstrated calligraphy on handmade bamboo paper.

"We wanted to create a high-quality museum experience that—as far as possible—is dynamic, helps visitors understand the changing lifestyles of the people of Laos, and encourages people to think about identity, culture and heritage," Gujadhur told the international ecotourism magazine *Ecoclub*.

Presented with the assistance of Iu Mien and Kim Di Mun community members, *Splendor and Sacrifice* ran from 2009 through 2011, attracting more than 13,000 visitors.

Left: Two candidates for Yao Mun priesthood are dressed before their ordination ceremony. Opposite, from left: Yao Mien offerings to the ancestor spirits; A man transcribes an old prayer in the Chinese-character-based Yao language.

“The Splendor and Sacrifice exhibition and research project have raised awareness of the fascinating Taoist rituals and traditions of the Iu Mien and Kim Di Mun peoples of northern Laos, and helped to preserve the rich, intangible cultural heritage of these minority communities for future generations.”

– U.S. Ambassador to Laos
Karen B. Stewart



MONGOLIA



SAFEGUARDING A BUDDHIST TREASURE



Nestled at the end of a deep valley beneath the sheer cliff of Burenkhan Mountain, Mongolia's Amarbayasgalant Monastery is a place that inspires contemplation. Built between 1727 and 1736 to house the remains of Zanabazar, the first *Bogd Gegeen* ("living Buddha," or incarnated leader of Buddhism) of Mongolia, the monastery was once one of the largest Buddhist centers in the country. As for Zanabazar, he was not only a renowned Buddhist leader, but the greatest Mongolian sculptor of his time (1635–1723 C.E.) and the founder of the Zanabazar art school.

The monastery narrowly escaped destruction in the 1930s during Mongolia's Soviet Era (1924–1990), a period when many similar structures did not survive. The monastery complex originally housed more than 40 temples. The 28 temples that remain have been under state protection since 1944, and efforts to restore the complex were launched in 1988.

The interiors of the monastery's *Tsogchin* (Main) Temple are lavishly decorated with embroidered textiles, brightly painted statues of Shakyamuni Buddha ("the awakened Buddha"), and architectural details created from papier-mâché and carved wood, often featuring intricate design motifs illuminated in gold.

With such priceless adornments, the Amarbayasgalant Monastery—one of Mongolia's oldest wooden architectural structures—is at great risk of theft and fire. Through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, the U.S. Embassy in Ulaanbaatar has contributed a total of \$672,200 to help protect the monastery from both threats. An initial grant of \$86,200 was given to the Arts Council of Mongolia. Restoration efforts launched in June 2009 included a comprehensive assessment of the monastery's fire-safety and security systems, development of



Opposite: The Amarbayasgalant Monastery has stood in the valley below Burenkhan Mountain since the 18th century. Left: Restored tile roof on one of the monastery's many pavilions.



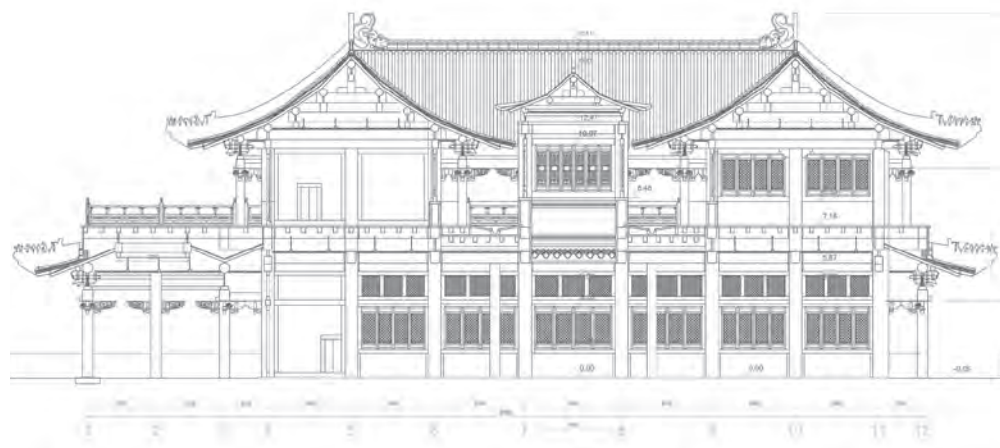
architectural drawings, plans for new electrical and security-camera systems, installation of fire extinguishers and fire-safety equipment, and documentation and registration of cultural artifacts and manuscripts. With that project completed, another restoration effort is under way, funded by an additional \$586,000 grant from AFCP in 2010. The new project picks up where the first left off by rewiring the temple's electricity and installing fire detection and suppression systems as well as a security system. The 2010 grant will also help restore the roof of the main temple.

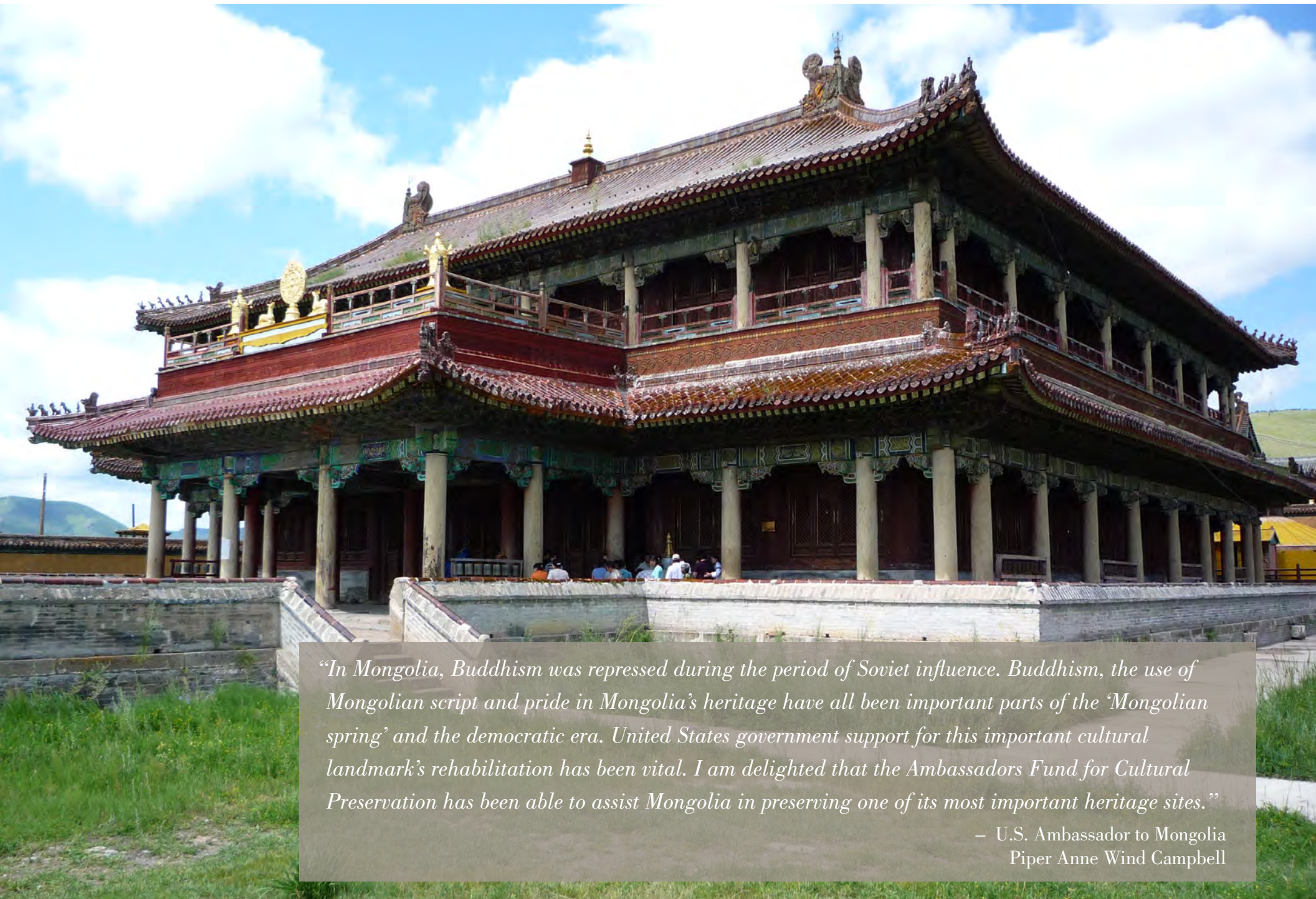
The AFCP-supported improvements have won high praise from local residents, including Olonbayar Erdenebat, who previously served as a *lama*, or spiritual instructor, at Amarbayasgalant Monastery.

“Amarbayasgalant Monastery is one of the most cherished heritage centers not only in Mongolia but also in the region of Asia,” Erdenebat said. Calling the monastery's wooden architectural construction an “original artistic masterpiece,” Erdenebat added that “with this vast renovation project to preserve and protect this site, the AFCP has made [a] historically significant contribution to continue the cultural legacy of what the site represents for future generations [in] Mongolia.”



Top left: The gable roofs of the monastery's minor buildings mimic the peaks of the Burenkhan mountain range in the distance. Bottom left: A wall of identical devotional figurines animates the interior of the main temple of Amarbayasgalant Monastery. Below: Architectural drawing showing a section through the main temple. Opposite: Tsogchin (Main) Temple at Amarbayasgalant Monastery.





“In Mongolia, Buddhism was repressed during the period of Soviet influence. Buddhism, the use of Mongolian script and pride in Mongolia’s heritage have all been important parts of the ‘Mongolian spring’ and the democratic era. United States government support for this important cultural landmark’s rehabilitation has been vital. I am delighted that the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation has been able to assist Mongolia in preserving one of its most important heritage sites.”

— U.S. Ambassador to Mongolia
Piper Anne Wind Campbell



EURASIA AND EUROPE



MACEDONIA



TURKEY



UKRAINE



MACEDONIA

RESTORING BYZANTINE MASTERPIECES



Nestled on the shores of the pristinely blue Lake Ohrid in the Republic of Macedonia is one of the most ancient settlements in Europe. Named a UNESCO World Heritage site, the city of Ohrid is known for its exceptionally beautiful natural surroundings as well as its architecture, which UNESCO cites as “the best preserved and most complete ensemble of ancient urban architecture of the Slavic lands.”

Ohrid occupies a unique place in European civilization, as it is the site where Saints Cyril and Methodius are believed to have invented the first Slavic alphabet, Glagolitic. The city was a major center of learning for the region during the Byzantine era, and the Roman road Via Egnatia connecting Rome to Byzantium, and Europe to Asia, passed through its city lines.

Ohrid is also home to one of Macedonia’s oldest churches, the 13th-century monastery of the Holy Mother of God Peribleptos, or “the one who sees from high above.” Among the church’s many cultural jewels—which include an extensive array of late Byzantine frescoes—are the first-documented works by legendary Thessalonica painters Michael and Eutychius. The monastery’s frescoes depicting images from the Passion, the Gospels, and the lives of the Virgin Mary and John the Baptist are among the best examples of the Palaeologan style embraced by Byzantine painters of the period.

The Ohrid region was once home to 365 churches (according to legend, one for each day of the year), but today, there are significantly fewer. Those that remain have suffered from the elements, vandalism and neglect. Unfortunately, the Holy Mother of God monastery has also fallen victim to these hazards. Poor maintenance of the roof, the lack of a drainage system and weakened lime mortar joints on the facades have led to extensive water damage on the fresco



Opposite: The interior of the Peribleptos church is decorated with 13th-century frescoes in the Palaeologan style signed by artists Michael and Eutychius. Left: Ohrid, Macedonia.



walls as crystallized salts formed on the painted surface. In certain areas, fresco plaster degraded and large painted areas began to fall off.

In 2009, the Peribleptos Monastery complex required immediate repairs to prevent irreversible loss. To meet these challenges, the U.S. Embassy in Skopje awarded \$650,000 through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to the Cultural Heritage Protection Office of the Republic of Macedonia to support the monastery's restoration. Much of the grant is specifically intended to restore the monastery's frescoes. The monastery will also undergo extensive external and internal repair. Professional architects, conservators and foreign Byzantine fresco restoration experts, together with local experts, are conducting the research and performing the restoration.

In addition to recognizing the monastery's cultural significance, the restoration project is expected to boost international tourism to the area and generate income for Ohrid's residents. Philip T. Reeker, who was U.S. ambassador to Macedonia when the grant was awarded, spoke about the project's benefits at the signing of the grant agreement on October 29, 2009.

"Restoring the church and its frescoes will recall the glory of the work of the fresco painters Michael and Eutychius and Orthodox cultural expression. Restoration will provide Ohrid with a world-class attraction for international guests and travelers," Reeker said. "It will be wonderful to see more people coming to Macedonia to see its treasures, to meet its people and to build its economy."



Top left: To protect the church interior while restoring the tile roof, workers had to build temporary wooden coverings. Bottom far left: The Holy Mother of God Peribleptos Church in Ohrid, Macedonia, dates to the 13th century. Bottom left: Arched window detail found on the church. Opposite: A paintings conservator carefully preserves the damaged frescoes in the Peribleptos church. Inset: Many of the church's frescoes were in advanced states of deterioration.

“The project to restore and preserve the stunning Holy Mother of God Peribleptos Church in Ohrid is a wonderful example of our commitment to helping protect the vibrant cultural heritage of Macedonia. Built in 1295, then neglected, rebuilt and expanded across the centuries, the church and its spectacular frescoes capture the rich, diverse tapestry of this country’s history. The rare frescoes, which are being restored to their early glory with support from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, are a cultural treasure that we are helping to preserve so that generations to come can appreciate their beauty, as we do today.”

– U.S. Ambassador to the Republic of Macedonia
Paul Wohlers



TURKEY



PRESERVING THE LEGACY OF A LOST CITY



On a lonely plateau in northeastern Turkey, only a few buildings mark the site of one of the world's great cities. In the 10th century, the city of Ani teemed with hundreds of palaces, fortifications and houses of worship, including some of the most technically and artistically advanced structures of their time. The city served as the political and commercial capital of the Bagratid Armenian kingdom, which rose to prominence in the ninth century and receded from power in the 12th century. At its height, Ani was situated along numerous trade routes and boasted a population of more than 100,000 inhabitants—rivaling Constantinople, Baghdad and Cairo.

Political turmoil and instability plagued Ani beginning in the 11th century, and it was subsequently occupied by the Byzantines, Seljuks, Persians and Georgians. Earthquakes and a Tartar invasion in the 13th century led many of the city's residents to flee the city. Though Ani remained an important trade center well into the 14th century, it receded in size and strength as trade routes started bypassing it to the south. By the end of the 18th century, Ani was totally abandoned.

The people who built Ani were architectural innovators who built churches and cathedrals that boasted many features later echoed in Western Gothic architecture. Pointed arches, clustered piers, domes, vaulted ceilings and the cruciform layout common to Western Gothic cathedrals can be traced to Armenian structures of the early Christian era. In Ani, the stone ruins of the Great Cathedral—considered a masterpiece of medieval Armenian architecture—and the Church of Saint Gregory bear silent witness to the origins of the Western Gothic style.



Opposite: Ruins of the Church of the Holy Redeemer (Surp Amenap'rkitch), constructed in 1035 while Ani flourished. Left: Remains of the Great Cathedral and the round Church of the Holy Redeemer, Armenian architectural masterpieces in Ani, Turkey.



Once dubbed the “City of Forty Gates” and the “City of 1,001 Churches,” Ani has retained precious few of its original structures. Among the surviving buildings is the Surp Amenap’rkitch Church (Church of the Holy Redeemer), which was constructed in 1035 at a time when Ani flourished. Since then, the Surp Amenap’rkitch Church has suffered from neglect, vandalism and numerous earthquakes. In 1930, the south-east side of the church collapsed after being struck by lightning, which split it in two and further endangered the building’s structural integrity.

In 2011, the U.S. Embassy in Ankara made a grant of \$625,000 through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to conserve, consolidate and strengthen the remains of the Surp Amenap’rkitch Church for the study and enjoyment of future generations. The World Monuments Fund (WMF) and the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism are working together on the project. Courses in masonry, traditional building techniques and stone conservation are planned to provide members of the local community with new economic opportunities as well as the skills needed to preserve the site in the long term.

“There has long been international concern about the fragile condition of the many extraordinary ruins at Ani,” said WMF President Bonnie Burnham. “We hope that this work will usher in a new era in the life of this important site.”

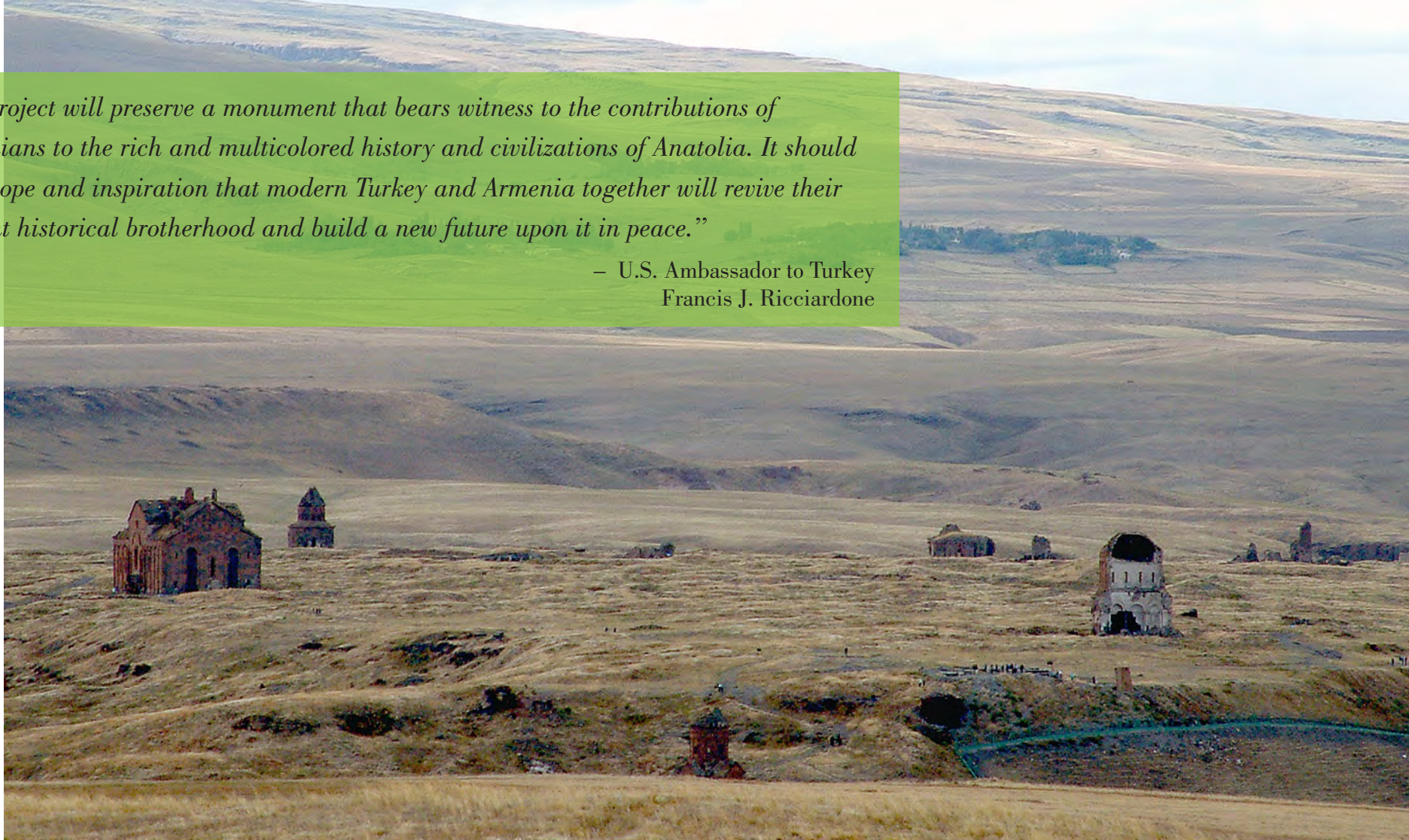
In a May 2011 interview with an Associated Press reporter, Turkish Minister of Culture and Tourism Ertuğrul Günay spoke about Ani’s immense historical value and its potential as a magnet for international tourism. “Ani, which is of global significance, presents particularly complicated challenges,” he said. “We hope that giving new life to the remains of once-splendid buildings, such as the Ani Cathedral and church, will bring new economic opportunities to the region.”

Above: Sketch of Ani in its heyday, the 10th and 11th centuries. Below: The ruins of the ancient city of Ani in 2011. Opposite: Remains of the city of Ani as seen from Armenia.



“This project will preserve a monument that bears witness to the contributions of Armenians to the rich and multicolored history and civilizations of Anatolia. It should offer hope and inspiration that modern Turkey and Armenia together will revive their ancient historical brotherhood and build a new future upon it in peace.”

– U.S. Ambassador to Turkey
Francis J. Ricciardone





UKRAINE

NEW LIFE FOR A LITERARY HOME



Anton Chekhov may now be hailed as a playwright and master of the modern short story, but he did not begin his literary career with such lofty ambitions. Born in 1860, Chekhov began writing short stories in 1879 to support himself and his family while working his way through Moscow University Medical School. Early on, Chekhov—a prolific writer said to have written hundreds of works in his lifetime—published his rapidly composed short stories in Russian daily newspapers. By 1886, Chekhov’s works were attracting critical and popular acclaim, and in 1892 he suspended his medical career to pursue writing full-time.

Although Chekhov is considered a Russian writer, he spent some of his most productive years in Yalta, Ukraine, in a home he called White Dacha. “My Yalta dacha has turned out to be very comfortable; warm and cozy with a lovely view,” Chekhov wrote in 1899, shortly after moving to Ukraine. “The garden is going to be spectacular. I am planting it myself, with my own hands.”

A great many of Chekhov’s works have been translated into Ukrainian, and Ukrainian-born writers including Lev Shestov and Irène Némirovsky cite him as an influence. It was in his Ukrainian home that Chekhov wrote “The Lady with the Dog” and two of his greatest plays, *The Cherry Orchard* and *Three Sisters*. At White Dacha, Chekhov hosted great Russian artists of the day, including writer Maxim Gorky, opera singer Feodor Chaliapin and theater actor and director Constantin Stanislavski. Chekhov was entertained by Sergei Rachmaninoff on the piano and regularly telephoned writer Leo Tolstoy from the study.

White Dacha is unique also in that it has been preserved exactly as it was when Chekhov last left it in May 1904, two months before his death.

Opposite: Anton Chekhov had the White Dacha built in Yalta, Ukraine, in 1898. A door off the study, shown in 2009, leads to Chekhov’s bedroom. Left: Chekhov entertained many notable Russians at the White Dacha, including Leo Tolstoy (on right), shown with Chekhov in Yalta in 1900.

After Chekhov's death, White Dacha and its gardens withstood an earthquake, hurricanes and numerous World War II bombings under the tireless care of Chekhov's sister, Maria. After Maria's death in 1957, the Soviet government assumed responsibility for the home, preserving it as a house museum honoring Chekhov's life and work. With the collapse of the Soviet Union, funding for the house museum was abruptly halted in 1991. The house museum has since fallen into a precarious state of disrepair.

On January 29, 2010, the 150th anniversary of Chekhov's birth, the U.S. Embassy in Kiev announced its contribution of \$39,000 through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to support White Dacha's restoration. The grant is being used to restore the interior of the famed writer's residence, including curtains, furniture upholstery and tablecloths that have deteriorated while on display in the memorial rooms. The project aims to revive the fabrics' original beauty, which was lost over 110 years of use, and to allow visitors to experience Chekhov's home as it was during his lifetime.

The grant is expected not only to help revitalize the White Dacha's Art Nouveau interiors, but to stimulate tourist interest in the house as well. The U.S. Embassy hopes the restoration of Chekhov's White Dacha will enhance Yalta's reputation as an international travel destination and bolster the local economy.

Below: Anton Chekhov's White Dacha in 1901. Right: Portrait of Anton Chekhov by Osip Braz, 1898. Opposite: Chekhov's study in 2011. Inset: Anton Chekhov in his study at the White Dacha in 1900.



“On the 150th anniversary of Chekhov's birth, his admirers are now found in every corner of the globe. I am reminded of the scene in The Cherry Orchard when the student Trofimov speaks to Anya, the aristocratic daughter of a bankrupt family. ‘If we're to start living in the present isn't it abundantly clear that we've first got to redeem our past ...?’ This project is the first that has been entirely initiated under my tenure as ambassador, and it holds a special place in my heart.”

– U.S. Ambassador to Ukraine
John F. Tefft

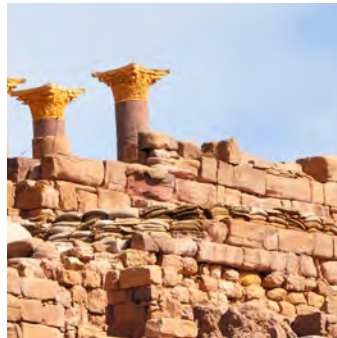




MIDDLE EAST



IRAQ



JORDAN



LEBANON

IRAQ



ANCIENT BABYLON REBORN



Ancient Babylonia—situated between the Tigris and Euphrates rivers in modern-day southern Iraq—is considered a birthplace of human civilization. Its capital, Babylon, was a city of such scale and sophistication that Greek philosopher Aristotle considered it more comparable to a nation than to a city. The former imperial capital of Kings Hammurabi and Nebuchadnezzar in southern Mesopotamia from the 18th to the sixth century B.C.E., Babylon was once one of the largest and most influential cities in the world.

At nearly 900 hectares, Babylon flourished as a center for culture and engineering and was renowned for its temples, libraries and royal collections. Its citizens are credited with making tremendous advances in astronomy, mathematics, art and architecture. The celebrated “Hanging Gardens of Babylon”—one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World—are said to have been built within its boundaries. Babylon held the distinction of being the largest city of its time, until the advent of the Roman Empire.

Today, however, only shadows of this once great city remain. Its fragile architectural ruins rest just 90 kilometers south of Baghdad. Since its founding many millennia ago, the city of Babylon has been ravaged by war, time and vandalism. Celebrated archaeological treasures such as the Ishtar Gate, Nabu-sha-Khare Temple and the inner-city walls are in urgent need of major restoration to reverse decades of deterioration. Yet the site has been repeatedly denied designation as a World Heritage site, in part because it lacks clearly defined boundaries, a comprehensive preservation plan and safeguards to ensure sustainable tourism.

In 2010, the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad gave \$2 million through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to World Monuments Fund for archaeological site preservation,



Opposite: Aerial view of the Southern Palace of ancient Babylon. Left: Iraqi cultural heritage professionals learn how to assess the condition of Nabu-sha-Khare Temple during a workshop supported by a grant from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.



environmental monitoring, and training of Iraqis in the conservation of earthen architecture. The World Monuments Fund is carrying out the four-year project in coordination with the U.S. Embassy and in partnership with the Iraq State Board of Antiquities and Heritage. The funding supports further documentation and stabilization of some of Babylon's major structures. It also allows conservators to address water drainage problems at the Ishtar Gate and several temples; develop environmental monitoring systems; and train State Board employees, thereby strengthening Iraq's capacity to preserve its cultural sites and monuments for future generations and to reap the economic benefits of tourism.

Top left: Iraqi workers clean out the central courtyard of the Nabu-sha-Khare Temple during preservation work supported by the 2010 grant. Bottom left: Iraqi workers shore up a fragile section of the inner-city wall as part of the World Monuments Fund preservation project. Bottom right: View of the original Ishtar Gate with the rebuilt Processional Way in the background. Opposite, from top: This famous sixth-century-B.C.E. statue showing a lion standing over a human greets visitors to Babylon; The archaeological remains of the Northern Palace of ancient Babylon have never been restored.



“In partnership with the government of Iraq and with the World Monuments Fund, the Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation provided site maintenance, environmental monitoring, and training in conservation techniques at the ancient site of Babylon, preserving Iraq’s rich cultural heritage for generations to come.”

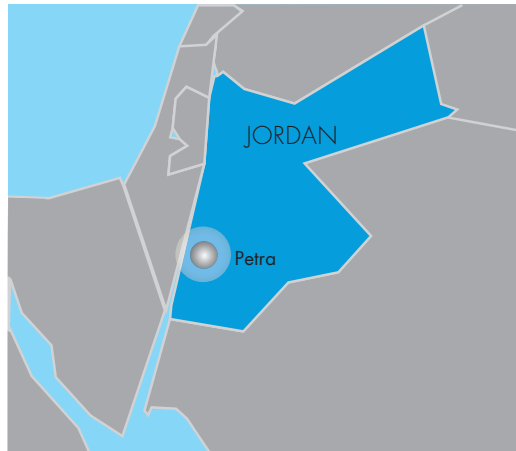
– U.S. Ambassador to Iraq
Robert Stephen Beecroft



JORDAN



TEMPLE OF THE WINGED LIONS TAKES FLIGHT



High above the fortress city of Petra, in modern-day Jordan, two imposing, rose-red, stone winged lions survey what was once the capital of the ancient Nabataean kingdom. The lions may have belonged to the first-century Temple of the Winged Lions, one of the most iconic structures in a stone city so stunning that it was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1985 and one of the New Seven Wonders of the World in 2007.

Half built, half carved from massive rock faces, Petra is surrounded by mountains and guarded by a narrow gorge, which afforded it unique protection from invaders in centuries past. Although the site has been inhabited by numerous peoples since prehistoric times, it was the Nabataeans who carved the rose-red sandstone into a city.

A nomadic tribe from North Arabia, the Nabataeans settled in present-day Jordan, Israel and Saudi Arabia around 600 B.C.E. The Nabataeans carved their capital of Petra between the Red Sea and the Dead Sea, where they prospered through trade and from the diverse cultural traditions of their trading partners. Situated at the crossroads of ancient Arabia, Egypt and Syria-Phoenicia, Petra was a major commercial center for these ancient civilizations, hosting traders bearing silks from China, spices from India and incense from Arabia.

As Nabataean merchants enriched their coffers through trade, they also enriched their culture. Nabataeans borrowed religious customs from their Mediterranean partners, worshipped Greco-Roman deities and paid homage to pre-Islamic Arab gods and goddesses. The ancient structures in Petra stand as testament to this religious and cultural fusion. Combining exquisitely carved Hellenistic facades with the stark architectural style of traditional Nabataean temples and tombs, Petra is one of the world's most celebrated architectural sites.



Opposite: The Temple of the Winged Lions during an installation of temporary columns and capitals meant to emulate the original structure. Left: The Temple of the Winged Lions in Petra dates from the first century C.E.



Beyond the towering temples and tombs, one of the city's most remarkable features is its innovative water management system that collected and redirected seasonal rains via a vast network of cisterns, reservoirs, diversion dams and channels—and enabled this otherwise arid region to flourish into a desert oasis.

Marked today by rows of stunted columns, Petra's Temple of the Winged Lions was once a religious complex that contained crypts, annexes and living quarters as well as marble, metal and painting workshops. Constructed in 27 C.E., the temple provides a glimpse into how ancient Nabataeans lived. While the precise identity of the temple's deity is unknown, artifacts suggest it could be the Egyptian goddess Isis, patroness of fertility, or the pre-Islamic Arab goddess Al-Uzzá, whom Nabataeans associated with the Greek goddess Aphrodite.

Petra's location at the end of a narrow gorge does not protect it from all threats. Wind, rain and flash floods erode the sandstone, and natural decay undermines the rock city's structural integrity. Evidence suggests that an earthquake in 363 C.E. devastated the Temple of the Winged Lions.

Today, the temple is also threatened by increased tourism. In 2011, the U.S. Embassy in Amman, through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation, awarded the American Center of Oriental Research and the Jordanian Department of Antiquities a \$600,000 grant to stabilize, repair and increase accessibility to the Temple of the Winged Lions. The grant is also being used to train Jordanian conservation specialists and educate local Jordanians about the site.

U.S. Ambassador to Jordan Stuart E. Jones expressed hope that the project will also elevate the site's reputation in the eyes of Jordanians as well as international tourists. "Through this project, future generations of Jordanians and visitors from all over the world will continue to enjoy, marvel at and learn from the ingenuity of the Nabataeans—the same creative and resourceful spirit that infuses modern Jordan."

Project managers have made a particular effort to involve local women in the site's restoration by employing them to help sew and fill sandbags that are crucial to the operation. A complementary AFCP grant of \$83,700



Top: Local women sew and fill sandbags that are crucial to the temple's stabilization and protection. Bottom: The project team installing temporary columns during the conservation of the Temple of the Winged Lions. Opposite: Sandbags sewn and filled by local women form a protective barrier in front of the Temple of the Winged Lions.





supported Petra National Trust's restoration of an ancient Nabataean dam to protect visitors from flash floods and reduce water erosion.

The United States hopes that its support will help boost economic growth in Jordan, where tourism is the fastest-growing sector. By stabilizing and conserving the site and enhancing the visitor experience, the preservation of the Temple of the Winged Lions should increase this ancient wonder's popularity as a tourist destination.

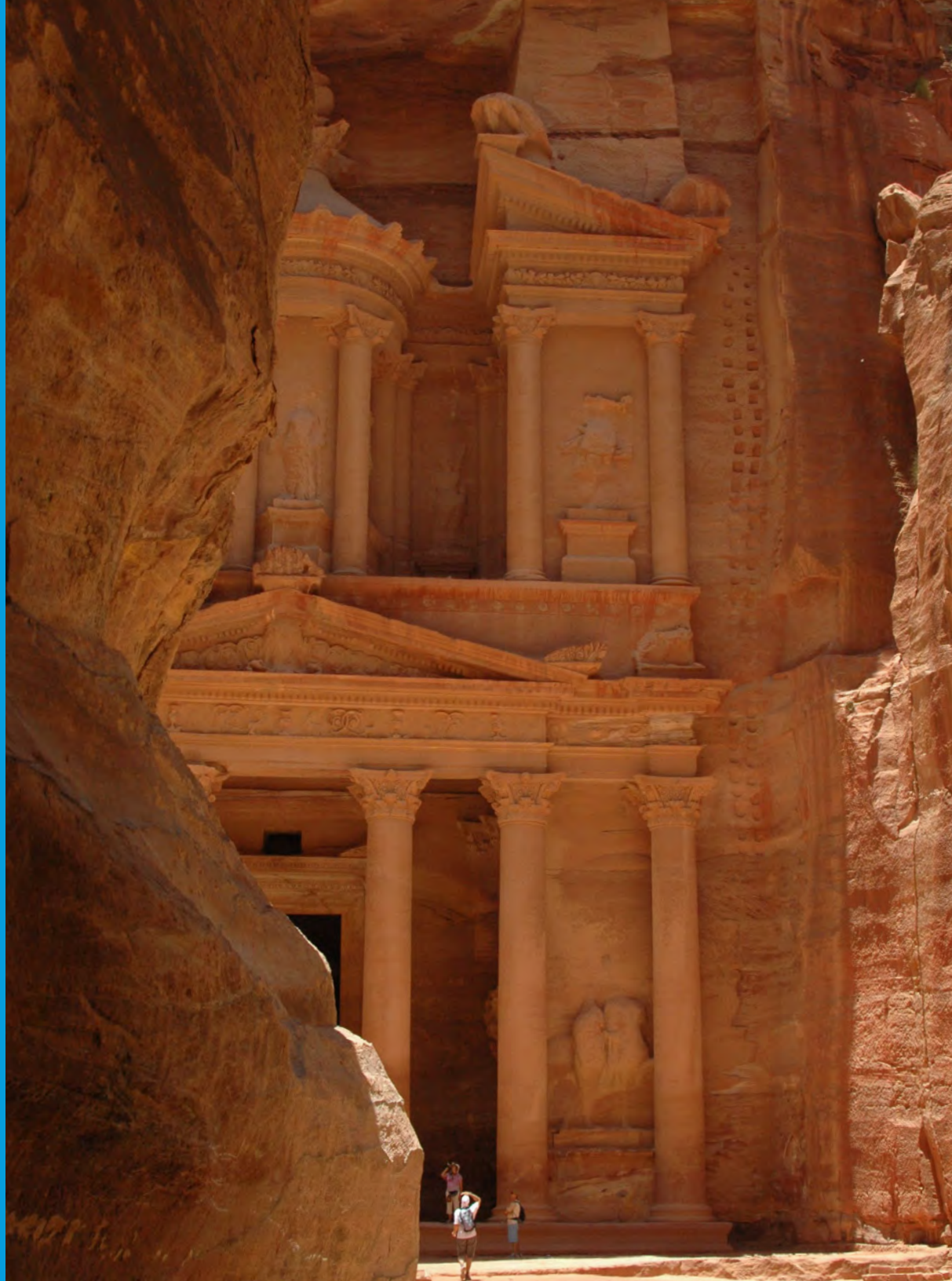
Left: Temporary columns were installed on site to help the conservation team test its proposed plan and visualize the final goal. Bottom: The project team installs replicas of the Winged Lion capitals atop temporary columns. Opposite, from left: Petra's signature rose-red sandstone; The Treasury as seen from the Siq, or main entrance.





“Petra is one of the most memorable and magnificent places on Earth. Hiking through the rose-colored Siq and coming up on the ancient ‘Treasury’ for the first time is a truly unforgettable experience. The vast park beyond the Siq is also inspiring and its preservation is a global responsibility. It has been an honor and delight to work with Jordanian officials, experts and civil society to help preserve this World Heritage site.”

— U.S. Ambassador to Jordan
Stuart E. Jones



LEBANON



REDISCOVERING A BYZANTINE JEWEL



The ancient Phoenician city of Byblos in modern-day Lebanon once glittered with richly decorated Christian sanctuaries. As Christianity spread across the region during the first century, some of the newly converted expressed their faith by painting exquisite frescoes on church walls.

Of the remaining works, none are so celebrated as those in the Church of Saint Theodore in the village of Behdaïdat in Jbeil, Lebanon. Locally known as the Church of Mar Tadros, Saint Theodore is regarded as one of the best remaining examples of ancient Near Eastern architecture. While the church itself was built in the 11th or 12th century, its murals are believed to date back to the 13th century and are considered some of the finest examples of the Syriac Orthodox style of painting.

Famed French traveler Ernest Renan, who visited Saint Theodore church in the early 19th century, declared the church “worthy of attention” and said its paintings “can pass as the most precious specimen of Syrian art.”

Far from being an unused relic from ancient times, Saint Theodore is currently the local Orthodox Christian community’s primary place of worship. The church is used regularly for Sunday Mass and other events.

During its more than 900-year history, however, the church and its frescoes have suffered their fair share of abuse. Numerous times the artwork has been defaced by vandals. Even the well-meaning have unintentionally damaged the art with several poorly executed attempts at restoration that left the paintings worse for wear. Humidity compounds human-driven injury by further damaging these fragile works of art.

Recognizing the church’s deep cultural significance, the U.S. Embassy in Beirut contributed \$44,000 through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2009 to support the



Opposite: Partially conserved frescoes inside the apse of the Church of Saint Theodore built in the 11th or 12th century. Left: Exterior of the Church of Saint Theodore in the village of Behdaïdat in Jbeil, Lebanon.



documentation, cleaning and restoration of Saint Theodore's frescoes. The project was completed in July 2010.

On July 28, 2010, then-U.S. Ambassador Michele J. Sison and Lebanon's then-Minister of Culture, Salim Wardy, toured the church to commemorate completion of the frescoes' restoration. Archaeological conservator Isabelle Skaf, a Beirut-based expert on conservation of antiquities, was also present and called the project "the rediscovery of a hidden jewel of Lebanon's cultural heritage."

The United States is pleased to have helped preserve the precious paintings for future generations. It is also hoped that the restoration will spur economic growth in the area through increased tourism. The Church of Mar Tadros will surely become the crown jewel of tourist destinations in a region blessed with numerous 11th- and 12th-century churches.



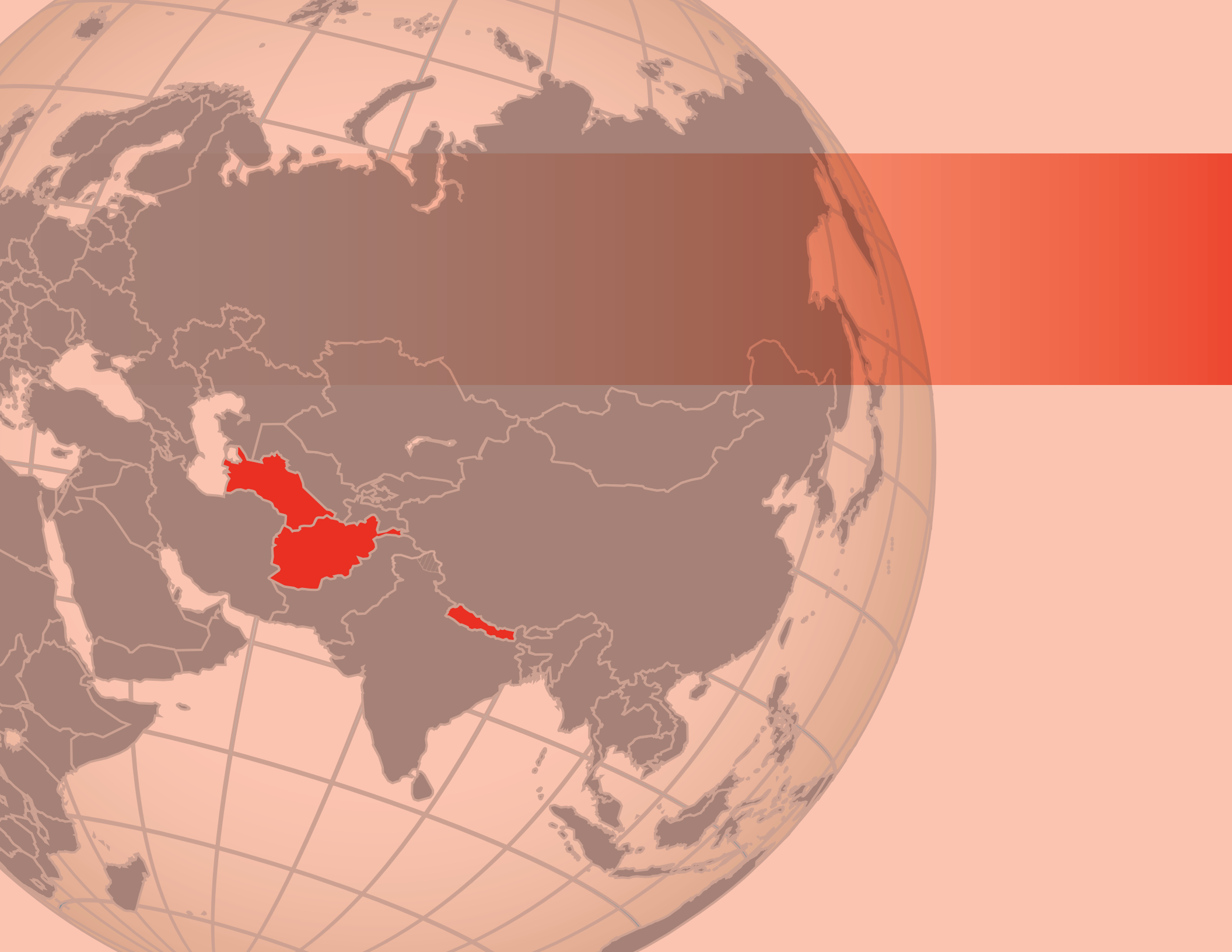
Top left: The coastline of Jbeil, Lebanon. Bottom left: A member of the conservation team working to restore the church's ancient frescoes. Below: Portions of the fragile frescoes were marked off in "test windows," such as this one, during their restoration. Opposite: Painting of Saint Theodore on horseback, known locally as Mar Tadros, before (left) and after restoration.





“The Church of Saint Theodore, located in Behdaidat in the Jbeil district of Lebanon, is home to some of the most beautiful Syriac Orthodox frescoes in the world. Conserving these centuries-old frescoes is essential to preserving an important part of Lebanon’s history, and we are pleased to contribute to that effort.”

– U.S. Ambassador to Lebanon
Maura Connelly



SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA



AFGHANISTAN



NEPAL



TURKMENISTAN

AFGHANISTAN



HOPE FOR HERAT CITADEL



The city of Herat, situated in modern-day Afghanistan along the ancient Silk Road trade route, has been a center of culture and commerce since 500 B.C.E. Arts and sciences thrived in this city renowned for its rich traditions in music, philosophy, calligraphy, painting, astronomy and mathematics.

Alexander the Great is believed to have captured the city from the ancient Persian Achaemenids around 330 B.C.E. and contributed to the development of the surrounding area. Included in Alexander's additions was the construction of a citadel that has since become central to the history of Herat. The citadel was successively damaged and repaired from the 11th century through the 13th century as the Turkmen, Mongols and Turkic leader Timur waged campaigns in the city. It was not until the 14th century that this cycle was broken and extensive reconstruction took place as Herat was experiencing a renaissance as a center for Islamic culture and learning.

The citadel, Qala e Ikhtyaruddin, is today one of the oldest extant structures in Herat's historic center. More than 250 meters long and 70 meters wide in parts, the citadel consists of two main enclosures that contain a number of buildings, an extensive courtyard, and 18 brick masonry towers set into walls that are 16 meters high in places.

Over the course of its long history, the citadel has been used as a royal residence, treasury, prison and arsenal. Centuries of conflict and neglect caused the structure to crumble, but the citadel remained a popular tourist destination until the 1970s for those seeking to explore Afghanistan's rich history.

Following nearly three decades of war, the Afghan Ministry of Information and Culture took over the site in 2005 and, along with the Aga Khan Trust for Culture (AKTC), began work to restore and preserve the citadel.



Opposite: Interior of the restored Herat Citadel, the foundations of which date from the 4th century B.C.E. Left: Workers restore brick masonry vaults in the northwestern quarter of the citadel complex.



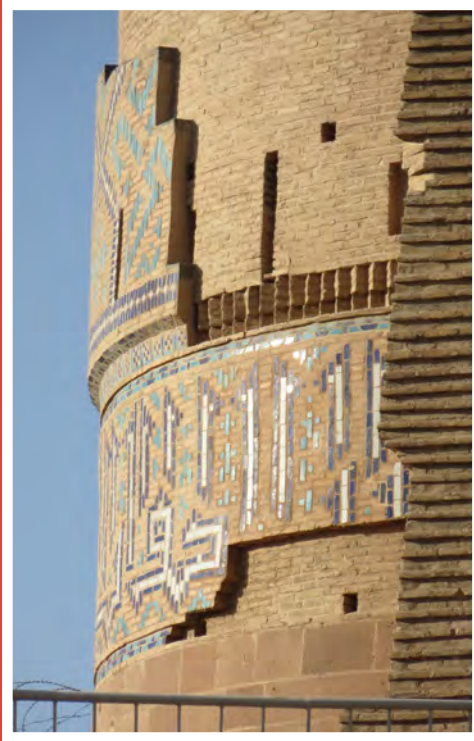
To support this ambitious and complex endeavor, the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation contributed \$1.2 million over a four-year period concluding in 2011, when Qala e Ikhtyaruddin was reopened to the public. During the four-year restoration, hundreds of Afghan craftsmen worked with AKTC to make bricks using traditional clay firing and masonry techniques, uncover and preserve original base layers of the structure's three main areas, repair the storm-drain system, recreate walls and doors to match the original structure and design an amphitheater for cultural activities.

The citadel's restoration was undertaken in partnership with the German government, which also contributed \$1.2 million and funded the development of a new museum showcasing Afghan artifacts from the site.

When the newly completed citadel and museum opened in 2011, some 200 guests joined members of the Afghan government, then-U.S. Ambassador Ryan Crocker and other officials from the U.S. Embassy, and representatives of the international community in celebrating the restoration of this priceless icon of Afghan heritage. "Just as the Herat Citadel is a symbol of Afghanistan's endurance, so too is it a symbol of the enduring commitment the United States is making to Afghanistan," said Crocker. "We look forward to the day when Afghans and visitors from around the world can come here to learn about Afghanistan's rich history while enjoying the beauty of this land."

The restoration of Qala e Ikhtyaruddin represents part of a greater U.S. effort to preserve Afghanistan's cultural heritage. Since 2010, the United States has contributed more than \$9 million to restore sites around the country, including the Shish Nal Mosque at the Darb e Malik, the 19th-century Goldasta Mosque and the 17th-century Mullah Mahmud Mosque in Kabul, the Khoja Rokhband Mosque and cistern in Herat, and the historic Bagh-e Babur Gardens and pavilions on Sher-e-Darwaza Mountain south of Kabul.

Left: The middle passageway between the citadel's upper and lower enclosures. Opposite, from left: Timurid tile work on the exterior of Herat Citadel after restoration; View of the citadel's north wall, ramparts, and Timurid tower.



“The Herat Citadel, Qala e Ikhtyaruddin, is one of Afghanistan’s most important architectural and cultural monuments. The United States is proud to contribute to the restoration of this great landmark, a centuries-old emblem of Afghan history.”

– U.S. Ambassador to Afghanistan
James Cunningham





NEPAL

REVIVING PATAN ROYAL PALACE




Past and present blur in Nepal, where ancient traditions remain an integral part of everyday life. For centuries, remote Nepal lay along one of the few trading routes between China and India, but the country remained largely isolated from the outside world until the first commercial airplanes touched ground in the early 1950s. Nepal today reflects a mingling of past and present: a harmonious marriage of Hinduism and Buddhism, of the sacred and the worldly, where modern-day global technology and age-old techniques coexist, and ancient traditions flourish within a modern, urban context.

Nowhere is this infusion of heritage as vibrant as in the Royal Palace complex in Patan. Built by the Malla dynasty in the 17th century, the Patan Royal Palace is one of only three remaining palace complexes in Kathmandu Valley and is considered one of the finest examples of royal buildings and temples in South Asia. The palace square has been recognized as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 1979.

The Patan Royal Palace was constructed as the Newars—an ancient people—were experiencing a cultural and political golden age. Much of Nepal's ornate art and architecture can be traced to the Newars, who are celebrated for the craftsmanship, artistry and variety of their intricate wood, brick and metal carvings. Architectural author Lucinda Lambton offers this vivid description of Newar carvings: "Layer upon writhing layer of gods dance, godlets ride elephants, horses leap forth, birds perch, yaks' tails swish, snakes twist, swords are brandished, lions sit staring, tigers are hunted, and a great many strangely stylized crocodiles lurk. A thousand skulls are carved into the pillars framing one doorway; 10,000 leaves and flowers are carved into another. Nothing is ever repeated."



Opposite: Rooftops of the Patan Royal Palace complex during restoration. Left: The Patan Royal Palace complex dates from the 17th century.



Unfortunately, centuries of neglect, structural degradation and well-intentioned but poorly executed attempts at restoration have taken their toll on the Patan Royal Palace complex. In addition, two major earthquakes, in 1833 and 1934, caused severe damage to the complex. In 2009, the U.S. Embassy in Kathmandu awarded a \$900,000 grant through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to help restore the site, and in 2012 awarded an additional \$200,000 to continue the work. The AFCP initiative to restore the Patan Royal Palace complex represents only the latest of several efforts by the U.S. government to help preserve Nepal's unique cultural heritage. Previous projects include the cleaning and restoration of three Buddhist monuments called *chhortens*, or *stupas*; restoration of the Machali Pati, a traditional rest house for pilgrims associated with the Hindu faith; and restoration of Nag Bahal Hiti, an ancient water supply system in the Kathmandu Valley.

Nepal's acclaimed Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust managed the large-scale palace restoration project. Founded in the early 1990s by Harvard emeritus professor of architecture Eduard Sekler and American architect Erich Theophile, the Preservation Trust has restored dozens of significant monuments and historic sites in Nepal, including more than 16 buildings in the Patan area.

The AFCP-funded project focused on several structures within the palace complex, including the Mul Cok, a 17th-century courtyard with much of its original carved wooden ornamentation intact; the Stone Gates, intricately carved portals that were partially reassembled after the 1934 earthquake; the Kot Pati, an early 19th-century rest house for pilgrims; and the Bahadur Shah Palace, a three-story, European-style brick building that became a museum and home to Harvard University's Nepal Architecture Archive. And for the first time in more than 40 years, water flowed through the spout at Tusa Hiti, the restored 17th-century step well.



Left to right: Carved wooden pillars in Patan Royal Palace; Stone carvers, brick makers and wood carvers worked side by side during the Patan Royal Palace restoration project; Once reserved for the king, the royal step well, or Tusa Hiti, at Patan Royal Palace has been restored for all to enjoy. Opposite: The Patan Royal Palace courtyard.

“The preservation of the Patan Royal Palace through AFCP not only protects one of the most important historical landmarks in South Asia but also supports Nepal’s development as one of the world’s leading tourist destinations. We are proud to stand with the Kathmandu Valley Preservation Trust in their commitment to excellence and dedication in preserving Nepal’s invaluable cultural heritage.”

– U.S. Ambassador to Nepal
Peter W. Bodde





TURKMENISTAN

SECURING SACRED SILK ROAD SITE



For the past 400 years, pilgrims from Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Kazakhstan and Pakistan have sojourned to Ismamut Ata, a monastic complex in the Görogly District in northern Turkmenistan. Today, a couple of mosques, a mausoleum, a *madrasa* (school) and a smattering of administrative buildings are reminders of this once-thriving, sacred medieval site.

Ismamut Ata rests at the southern edge of the Khorezm oasis where the ancient settlement of Ishrat-Kala was founded sometime during the 11th and 12th centuries. Meaning “pleasure,” the name *Ishrat* is thought to have derived from the feelings of weary Silk Road travelers upon seeing the first oasis settlement after long days riding through the Kara Kum Desert. A 2006 travel guidebook describes Ismamut Ata as “one of the most atmospheric places of shrine pilgrimage in Turkmenistan [that] deserves to be much better known.”

Shrine pilgrimages constitute an important element of the practice of Islam in Turkmenistan. The Ismamut Ata complex, which dates to the 16th or 17th century, provides shelter and respite for travelers and pilgrims alike. Many pilgrims come to visit the mausoleum, which serves as a shrine to Ismamut Ata, believed to be a contemporary and follower of the Prophet Muhammad and a founding father of Islam in Turkmenistan. Muslim holy men like Ismamut Ata are credited with playing a fundamental role not only in spreading Islam in the region, but also in strengthening a burgeoning communal identity.

One of the most notable features of this outstanding example of Central Asian medieval architecture is its silhouette. On the left side of the complex, seven white domes adorn the top of a long, narrow building leading to the mausoleum where the tomb commemorating Ismamut Ata is housed. Pilgrims exiting the mausoleum often walk backward through this long corridor known as the *dashkeche*, or “stone street,” to always keep the sacred site in their line of vision. Elsewhere in the



Opposite: Local workers restore the domed corridor leading to Ismamut Ata’s shrine complex, which dates to the 16th or 17th century. Left: More than 50,000 mud bricks were made on site to restore Ismamut Ata.



complex, rooms with domed ceilings, blackened fireplaces and ornate carved wooden doors open off an eye-catching courtyard. On the far side of the complex, a summer mosque with elaborately carved wooden pillars gives way to a winter mosque, atop which the call to prayer once sounded.

Unfortunately, the entire complex has suffered damage from northern Turkmenistan's harsh climate, which is characterized by severe winters, including rain and snow. The mausoleum's mud-brick walls have eroded, and exquisite wood carvings in the *madrassa* have been severely damaged. In fact, the monument is one of very few medieval monuments that have survived Turkmenistan's climate and are still accessible to the public.

Despite its historical and cultural significance, and continued attraction for pilgrims, the site has received very little international or domestic attention. To restore the structural integrity of the Ismamut Ata complex and promote awareness of its cultural importance, the U.S. Embassy in Ashgabat has committed \$140,000 since 2008 through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation.

The AFCP funds have helped the Turkmenistan Institute of History and local partners to research and restore the domed corridor leading to the mausoleum, the *ashkana* (kitchen), and the winter and summer mosques. The restoration of the exterior and interior walls of the corridor required the on-site manufacture of more than 50,000 mud bricks using local materials and traditional methods. While repairing the monument's masonry is the most urgent challenge, the roofs, roof beams, columns, doors and other woodwork are also sorely in need of attention.

The U.S. Embassy hopes the restoration of Ismamut Ata and concurrent public outreach about its historical and cultural significance will draw more visitors, both local and international, to this significant site, and help the government and people of Turkmenistan to strengthen their national identity through the reclamation of this icon of their historical and cultural heritage.

"Ismamut Ata is a critically important part of Turkmenistan's and Central Asia's cultural heritage," said Robert E. Patterson Jr., U.S. ambassador to Turkmenistan. "Attracting tens of thousands of pilgrims each year from Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, the site has served as a beacon for the faithful for nearly 10 centuries."

The AFCP has funded several similar projects in Turkmenistan, including the recent restoration of Mashat-Ata, Turkmenistan's oldest mosque dating back to the ninth century. The United States recognizes the essential role these sites have played in making Turkmenistan the rich culture that it is today. "The great Turkmen centers of learning in Mary, Ismamut Ata, and here in Mashat-Ata inspired generations of thinkers that formed the basis of Turkmen literature and history," said a senior U.S. official during Mashat-Ata's reopening ceremony on September 11, 2010. "Such great poets and thinkers as Dovletmamet Azadi, Makhtumkuli and Mollanepes used the teachings of Islam to become voices for a unified nation."

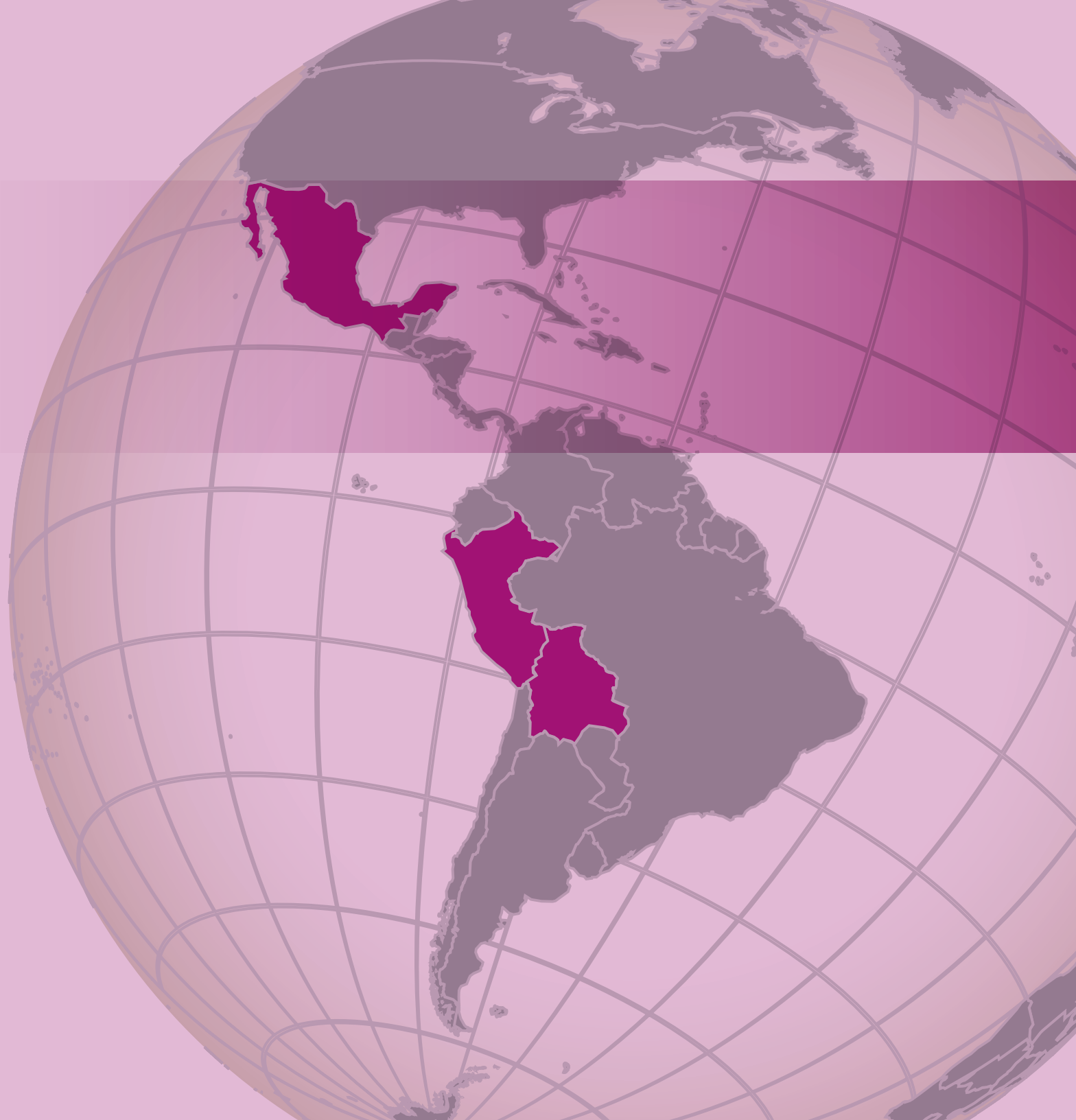


Top: Exterior of Ismamut Ata's domed corridor before restoration. Bottom: An imam sits just outside the newly repainted entrance to the domed corridor. Opposite, from left: The *dashkeche* prior to restoration; The *dashkeche* or "stone street," leading to the mausoleum where the tomb commemorating Ismamut Ata is housed.



“Countless pilgrims have journeyed across the desert to the Ismamut Ata complex since the earliest days of the Islamic faith. This stunning architectural monument is unique in Central Asia. We are proud to have had a hand in its preservation so that it can remain a crossroads of culture and civilization for centuries to come.”

– U.S. Ambassador to Turkmenistan
Robert E. Patterson Jr.



THE AMERICAS



BOLIVIA



MEXICO



PERU

BOLIVIA



COMMUNITIES UNITE TO PRESERVE CHAPELS



Four thousand meters above sea level in the Bolivian village of Curahuara de Carangas—the seat of the Sajama province of Oruro—dozens of small chapels dot the landscape of the *altiplano*. Since the pre-Columbian era, this village has sat on an important trade route for goods such as silver, mercury and llamas that runs from La Paz, Bolivia, to the nearest seaport in Arica, Chile. For the residents of Curahuara de Carangas, the chapels have served as important spiritual and community centers for more than 300 years.

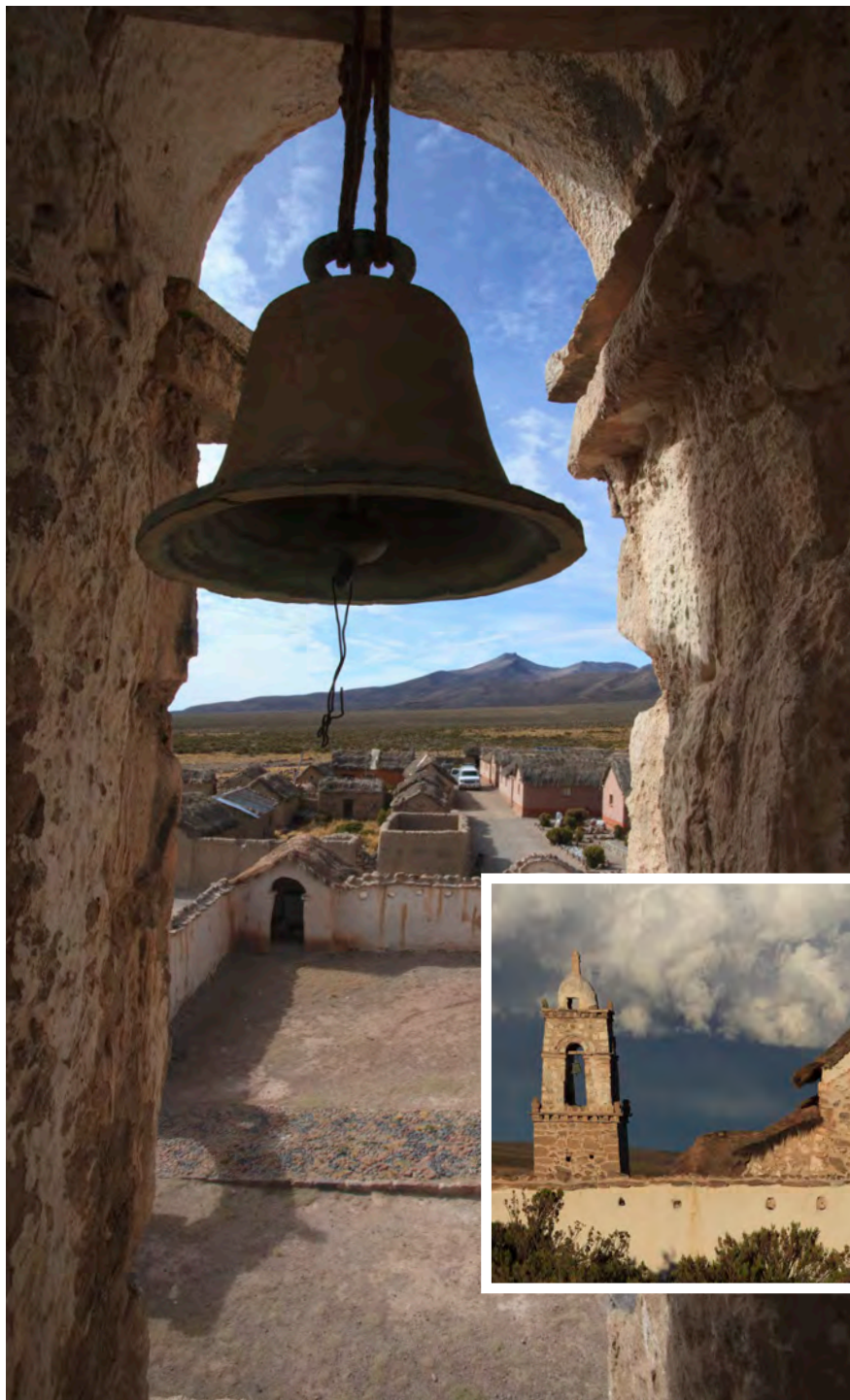
Built in the 17th and 18th centuries, the Curahuara de Carangas chapels represent an architecturally significant marriage of the indigenous Aymara culture with Spanish Colonial style. The chapels were constructed by indigenous craftsmen under the direction of Spanish architects and church officials during the Spanish colonial era. They were built to be houses of worship as well as landmarks for Oruro's villagers, who have traditionally been shepherds. Although the chapels are Roman Catholic, representations of the cosmology and history of the indigenous Aymara people, who have lived in the Andes for more than 2,000 years, adorn their interiors. The art of one church, simply known as the Curahuara de Carangas Church, is so stunning and vibrant that it has earned the nickname “the Sistine Chapel of the *Altiplano*.”

Local residents have maintained the chapels since the end of colonial rule in 1842, with little to no outside assistance. In years when there were no priests available to serve the chapels, community life continued to center on them, with locals gathering for funerals, weddings, traditional cultural celebrations and town meetings.

Unfortunately, centuries of cold and damp have caused severe deterioration in many of the chapels, with some so badly damaged that they are near collapse. Damage to their straw roofs



Opposite: Restored Huchusuma Chapel at Sajama National Park in Oruro, Bolivia. Left: The Curahuara de Carangas Church, built in 1608, has earned the nickname “the Sistine Chapel of the *Altiplano*” for its vibrant artwork.



has resulted in high levels of humidity in their interiors, which further threatens the plaster and paint on chapel walls.

In 2010 and 2012, the U.S. Embassy in La Paz granted \$82,800 to the Santiago de Curahuara de Carangas Parish through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to restore the Curahuara de Carangas chapels to their original splendor. To date, the grants have supported collaborative, community-led restoration of 11 chapels in indigenous villages of Bolivia's *altiplano*, including its "Sistine Chapel."

Under the leadership of Father Gabriel Antequera, the Parish of Curahuara de Carangas did an exemplary job of managing funds and promoting community participation. Antequera lobbied for state and national support and secured the cooperation of local authorities on the project. When he met with embassy officers for the first time several years ago, he identified the restoration of the chapels as one of the most urgent needs in Curahuara. Seeing them restored today, he says, "is a dream come true."

Antequera believes this project has brought together the isolated communities and families spread throughout the *altiplano*. Families used to travel to larger villages for weekend services; now they worship in their own villages. "The villagers found in this project the renovation of their faith, and they realized the important historic and cultural value of their chapels as well," Antequera said. "Now they have pride in their communities and their churches."

Fabiola Ibarnegaray, Embassy La Paz senior cultural affairs specialist, who worked tirelessly with the community throughout the chapels' restoration, was impressed with the commitment and participation of everyone involved. "Working with Father Gabriel, the architects and the communities has been inspiring," Ibarnegaray said.

The project has helped Embassy La Paz establish a relationship with the residents of Curahuara: a community leader traveled to the United States through the International Visitor Leadership Program, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) donated computers and furniture to a community library, and the embassy's former Chargé d'Affaires John S. Creamer celebrated Christmas with local children. Current Chargé d'Affaires Larry Memmott has visited the Curahuara villages several times to participate in traditional ceremonies marking progress in the restorations, including one asking Pachamama (Mother Earth) for permission to undertake the project.



Left: The Tomarapi Chapel (inset) and bell tower after restoration at Sajama National Park in Oruro, Bolivia. Opposite: People from the village of Kellcata in front of their unrestored chapel in Oruro.





After restoration of the second group of churches, Embassy La Paz's USAID office provided economic development funding to the community to create a system of road signs that direct tourists to the chapels and also explain their importance. The signs were inaugurated in March 2013 during the embassy-sponsored visit of a Native American expert on economically and environmentally sustainable tourism for indigenous communities.

One unanticipated benefit of the AFCP grant resulted from the strong relationship the embassy developed with Bolivian architects involved in the restoration. Bolivia's National College of Architects invited Embassy La Paz to present an exhibition featuring the work of Pritzker Architecture Prize-winning American architects to more than 1,000 of their members. The exhibit is also scheduled to tour universities throughout Bolivia.

Top left: The restored Lagunas Chapel, built in the 18th century. Bottom left: Altarpiece in the restored Tomarapi Chapel at Sajama National Park in Oruro, Bolivia. Bottom right: Members of the local community played important roles in restoring the Kellcata Chapel. Opposite: A view of the mountains through an arch of the restored Ojsani Chapel.



“The chapel restorations have allowed us to show our great respect for Bolivians and their cultural patrimony and to build bridges to audiences we might not otherwise have reached. They benefit the people of a dozen small communities, providing them not only with places of worship but much-needed spaces where the community can gather for other purposes. Further support from the U.S. will help the communities share these historic gems with tourists, developing another source of economic growth in a region where poverty is endemic.”

– U.S. Chargé d’Affaires
Larry Memmott





MEXICO

AQUEDUCT SPANS CULTURES, GENERATIONS



Soaring above the semiarid plains of Hidalgo in central Mexico, the 16th-century Father Tembleque Aqueduct is as stunning visually as it is architecturally. It took 16 years and 400 local laborers, led by Franciscan Friar Francisco de Tembleque, to complete the aqueduct, which is widely considered the 16th century's most important work of hydraulic engineering in the Americas. The sprawling structure once carried water a distance of 25.75 kilometers from the extinct Tecajete volcano to the previously uninhabitable, semidesert lands of Otumba. The spring water from the aqueduct allowed the region to develop agriculture and become a permanent settlement.

Among the aqueduct's most striking features are three volcanic stone arcades: Hacienda de Tecajete, Hacienda de Arcos, and Tepeyahualco. The southernmost arcade, Tepeyahualco, is considered the main arcade with 67 arches spanning 987 meters and reaching a height of 42 meters. According to legend, the main arch is large enough to allow a warship in full sail or even Mexico City's Cathedral to pass underneath untouched.

Although the aqueduct has deep roots in Roman imperial architecture, it is highly symbolic of the indigenous population that contributed to its construction and flourished from its development. Not only was the aqueduct built using indigenous, pre-Hispanic techniques and materials, it also bears glyphs representing the many communities that contributed to its construction.

Unfortunately, this hydrological masterpiece and cultural cornerstone has fallen into disrepair in recent decades due to weathering, erosion, wind damage, vandalism and encroaching



Opposite: The Tepeyahualco Arcade is an important part of the 16th-century Father Tembleque Aqueduct. Left: Workers extract liquid from the prickly pear cactus for use in the plaster coatings at the aqueduct project site.



construction. Tepeyahualco's structural integrity is challenged by invasive vegetation that has compromised its mortar and accelerated the disaggregation of its masonry.

With the aim of eventually restoring the structure to its original, fully functional state, the U.S. Embassy in Mexico has granted \$780,000 since 2011 through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation to restore the Father Tembleque Aqueduct. In partnership with Mexico's National Institute of Anthropology and History and the National Council for Culture and the Arts, the project is laying the groundwork for the aqueduct's long-term conservation, maintenance and management. The project hopes to protect the surrounding natural landscape, which has largely escaped the urban encroachment of nearby Mexico City.

The restoration of the 16th-century aqueduct is only one of several recent cultural preservation projects in Mexico funded by the U.S. Embassy through the U.S. Ambassadors Fund. Over the past 10 years, the embassy has also funded the enhancement of the Archaeological Resources Research and Management Development Center in Monte Albán, Oaxaca, to bolster Mexico's preservation capacity; the restoration of the Church of the Virgin of Candelaria's altarpiece in Yucatán; and the restoration of the 19th-century Garita de Metales building in Ciudad Juárez.

Top left: The Tembleque Aqueduct carries fresh water from the slopes of the extinct Tecajete volcano to cisterns in the semiarid region in the central highlands of Mexico. Bottom left: Glyphs representing the communities that contributed to the aqueduct's construction decorate its arches. Below: The Hacienda de Arcos Arcade is one of three monumental arcades along the Tembleque Aqueduct. Opposite: Railroad tracks run beneath the Tepeyahualco Arcade.





“Rescuing and restoring the Father Tembleque Aqueduct to its original function in effect makes it a living environmental monument. U.S. government participation in the project makes a powerful statement about our commitment to environmental preservation, sustainability and resource conservation. We hope it conveys our respect for the multicultural heritage that we share with all of the Americas.”

– U.S. Ambassador to Mexico
E. Anthony Wayne

PERU



CRADLE OF CIVILIZATION IN THE AMERICAS



Four thousand years before the Incas built Machu Picchu, the people of the sacred city of Caral were already busy building their own great civilization. Situated 182 kilometers north of the hustle and bustle of capital-city Lima, the ancient site of Caral transports visitors back 5,000 years—to what is now understood to be the cradle of civilization in the Americas.

Established around 2600 B.C.E. but forgotten until the 21st century, Caral made history in 2001 when archaeologists carbon-dated material from the city to 2627 B.C.E.—1,500 years earlier than expected. This shocking discovery revealed that the ancient people of Caral were, in fact, contemporaries of those who lived in ancient Egypt, China and Mesopotamia.

Not only is Caral one of the earliest settlements in the Americas, it is also one of the most highly developed and complex. Within the 626-hectare archaeological site, evidence of a fully developed sociopolitical state can be seen in the remaining pyramid temples, sunken plazas, housing complexes and amphitheater. It was named a UNESCO World Heritage site in 2009.

“Caral combined size with construction volume,” Peruvian archaeologist Ruth Shady said, “but it was also a planned city.”

Research has determined that Caral’s residents belonged to a highly organized social system that produced the most developed social and cultural traditions of its time. Farmers harvested crops such as pumpkin, corn, sweet potatoes, squash, chili peppers and cotton using irrigation canals from the Supe River. Musicians played flutes from pelican and condor bones and horns made from llama and alpaca bones—often decorated with ornate engravings of birds and monkeys from the Amazon. Evidence of extensive trade has also been discovered, with shrimp and mollusks from Peru’s coast found within the city limits.



Opposite: Green mountains tower over the ancient city of Caral’s third-millennium-B.C.E. pyramids. Left: Aerial view of the Great Pyramid at Caral.



Although Caral is exceptionally well-preserved for its age, 5,000 years of exposure to the elements have eroded its integrity. The constant wind blowing down from the Andean foothills has taken its toll on the site.

Thanks to an \$800,000 award from the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation in 2009, Caral's future is looking much brighter. With funds from AFCP, the Proyecto Especial Arqueológico Caral-Supe (Special Archaeological Project for Caral-Supe, or PEACS) developed a plan for permanent preventive conservation of Caral. PEACS is concentrating both on restoring Caral and training a team of local conservators to maintain the site in the future. Since specialists in archaeological stone and mud-monument conservation are scarce in Peru, PEACS organized field workshops to train local staff in the necessary techniques. The U.S. Embassy hopes that by training local workers in conservation techniques, it is supporting not only the future of Caral, but of other archaeological sites in the area.



Top across: 360-degree panoramic view of the ancient city of Caral, dating to 2600 B.C.E. Top left: Workers make mud bricks in the traditional way to restore ruins in the more than 5,000-year-old city of Caral in Peru. Bottom left: Local people learn conservation techniques to restore Caral and similar sites. Opposite: Caral at dusk.



“Emerging nearly untouched from the sandy dunes of the Supe Valley, the sacred city of Caral is a testament to the ingenuity and high level of development reached by this ancient people. The 5,000-year-old stones tell the fascinating story of a complex society that inhabited one of the world’s cradles of civilization. With the largest grant to date in the Western Hemisphere, the Ambassadors Fund enabled both conservation of the monuments and painstaking academic study, which have elevated the profile of this site and indelibly altered our understanding of history in the Americas.”

— U.S. Ambassador to Peru
Rose M. Likins



RESPECTING AND PRESERVING

With the creation of the U.S. Ambassadors Fund for Cultural Preservation (AFCP) in 2001, the United States pledged its support for the preservation of cultural heritage in developing countries and demonstrated U.S. respect for other cultures.

Since then, AFCP has supported projects to preserve cultural heritage in more than 125 countries around the world. This map highlights the countries that have received funding through AFCP since 2001.



CULTURAL HERITAGE WORLDWIDE





Embassy of the United States of America



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUREAU OF INTERNATIONAL INFORMATION PROGRAMS